

**Marginality, Development and Agency of the Adivasis in  
Kerala: A Sociological Study of Two Contemporary  
Social Movements**

**A thesis submitted to the University of Hyderabad  
for the award of the degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
Sociology**

**by  
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## Department of Sociology

### CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis titled **Marginality, Development and Agency of the Adivasis in Kerala: A Sociological Study of Two Contemporary Social Movements**, submitted by Mr. Rajesh K P (06SSPH04) for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology, is a record of bonafide work carried out by him under my supervision and guidance.

This Dissertation has not been submitted either in part or in full to any other university or institution of learning for the award of any other degree.

Hyderabad

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### DECLARATION

I, Rajesh K P (06SSPH04), hereby declare that the work embodied in this dissertation titled **Marginality, Development and Agency of the Adivasis in Kerala: A Sociological Study of Two Contemporary Social Movements** submitted under the supervision of Prof. N Purendra Prasad is a bonafide research work. I also declare that to the best of my knowledge it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this University or any other university or institution for the award of any other degree or diploma.

Hyderabad  
22-08-2016

Rajesh K P

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction: Marginality, Development and Agency**

The study deals with the contemporary social movements in Kerala with a focus on two specific cases: one, Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha (AGMS) and, the other, Anti-Coca Cola Movement in Plachimada. These two contemporary social movements emerged in Kerala in the post 1990s. The vulnerability of the adivasi communities in Kerala has been conspicuous with the reported starvation deaths of 32 adivasi people in the districts of Wayanad, Palakkad and Kannur during the months from July to August, 2001.<sup>1</sup> Hunger and starvation were two important indicators of poverty among adivasis.

Kerala is a state which has been described both in scholarly as well as in official discourses as an exemplification of a unique and distinct model of development. If so, how do we explain the paradoxical situation of high incidence of poverty among adivasis in Kerala through the discourse of the movements? Is poverty a manifestation of the marginality of adivasis in contrast with the highly acclaimed social development index of the Kerala state? The issues of poverty, starvation and deaths among the adivasis generated deep discontent and anguish against the state. This was quite evident in their individual and community responses which had appeared in various vernacular (Malayalam) newspapers in the latter half of 2001. Following this, C. K. Janu, a landless labourer and woman activist belonging to Adiya community; one of the most deprived and underprivileged groups among adivasis and M. Geethanandan, a former CPI (ML)

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<sup>1</sup>The newspapers in Malayalam such as Mathrubhumi, Madyamam and the English national dailies like The Hindu and The New Indian Express frequently published these reports during this period.

sympathiser and a dalit leader crystallized this annoyance and indignation of the adivasis under the organisation *Adivasi Dalit Samara Samithi* (A Protest Association of Adivasis and Dalits). *Adivasi Dalit Samara Samithi* was a conglomeration of various adivasi and dalit organisations. This experience of agitation had produced a new political imagination which was translated into the formation of an organisation exclusively for adivasis called *Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha* (hereafter AGMS). This organisation worked exclusively for adivasis and claimed that it is as an umbrella organization which encompassed several adivasi communities consisting of 380 representatives from 31 various adivasi communities of Kerala. It was also claimed that they had mobilised adivasis from all parts of the state, particularly from Wayanad district under the auspices of AGMS in order to negotiate with the state about their issues of deprivation and land alienation among adivasis.

Another instance of the predicament of adivasis can be seen in Plachimada, a small village in Palakkad district of Kerala during the same period. When Coca-Cola Beverages Private Ltd. India, an Indian division of The Coca-Cola Company, set up its bottling plant in Plachimada in the early 2000, the people, particularly adivasis, who have been living in the vicinity of the company, started complaining that the drinking water in that area has become unusable for both drinking and cooking. In addition, the people complained that the water bodies had also become polluted to a great extent due to the operation of the company. The pollution of drinking water had become a grave problem by January 2002. These material conditions provided the initial impetus for Plachimada agitation. On April 22, 2002, they launched an agitation under the auspices of *Adivasi Samrakshana Samithi* (Adivasi Protection Group) with the support of other civil society organisations.

There was a blockade by over 1,300 people mostly Adivasis who demanded closure of the factory to protect their basic needs and ensure their subsistence. Soon after, this protest was transformed as *Coca-Cola Virudha Janakeeya Samara Samithy* (Anti-Coca Cola Agitation Council of People) by obtaining support from different groups and later developed into a popular movement.

In brief, these agitations have sustained at various levels with different intensity till now<sup>2</sup> and in the course of time, those were reshaped as two significant social movements in the contemporary context of Kerala. Both the movements raised several critical questions with reference to marginality, development, rights of the underprivileged communities, subsistence and social justice. Perhaps, the state and society in Kerala haven't confronted such serious and deeper critique around the above mentioned themes in the recent past. Indeed, during the last one and half decades, these two movements marked the most important social and political mobilisations distinct from that of the existing community and caste organisations and mainstream political parties. From the latter half of 2000s, Kerala society witnessed the emergence of a plethora of social movements, collective actions, resistances and agitations around varied issues. These include a few issues such as the indiscriminate use of chemical fertilizers and its devastating implications on health and environment (*Movement against Endosulfan*); landlessness of the dalit communities (both *Chengara and Arippa Land Struggles*); issues of pollution and solid waste (*Vilappilsala agitation*); land acquisition for highway widening and industrial purposes (*NH 17 Samyuktha Samara Samithi* and *Proest against Kinaloor Industrial Park* respectively).

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<sup>2</sup> It refers to the time (April 2016) of writing this introduction chapter.

As far as the trajectory of adivasi life and history in the modern Kerala is concerned, these two movements (hereafter AGMS and Plachimada) are unparallel and if we consider periodically, these two are the predecessors of all the non-party movements and agitations took place in post 1990s. Thus, the socio-political history of Kerala since 1990 imbricates two major proclivities. The first refers to the decisive and assertive form of adivasi mobilisations with all its specificities and uniqueness and the second, various subaltern movements of the marginalized sections and common people of Kerala that took place during the same period. Although it is interesting to look at all the subaltern mobilisations in the post 1990, I have limited myself in the present study on the first proclivity within its larger historical context.

Given this milieu, unlike many of the conventional movement studies, which mostly focused on the internal dynamics of the social movements<sup>3</sup> – mobilisational aspects, organisation and strategies – the present study takes up three themes: *marginality*, *development* and *agency* in the context of AGMS and Plachimada. These themes emanated from the discourses<sup>4</sup> constructed within and by these two movements. Thus, the

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<sup>3</sup>The purpose is not to undermine the importance of mobilisational aspects in movement studies. Of course this aspect is also dealt with to some extent in the present study. However, the prime focus of this study going beyond this.

<sup>4</sup> Here the term discourse is used by following a post-Marxist understanding. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. In that sense, “discourse or discourses refer to systems of meaningful practices that form the identities of subjects and objects”. Therefore, “discourses are concrete systems of social relations and practices that are intrinsically *political*...” In addition to this, “they always involve the exercise of power, as their constitution involves the exclusion of certain possibilities and consequent structuring of the relations between different social agents” (Howarth and Yannis Stavrakakis 2000, 3-4).

present study aims to encapsulate more specific and concrete questions with respect to the aforementioned themes and its connection with the social movements. Indeed, it is important to spell out more specifically the plausible direction of the study in the beginning. The present study will seek to answer a set of following questions: how do we explain the macro and micro social and political context in which the emergence and further shaping of these two movements – AGMS and Plachimada – occurred? How did these two movements interrogate the issue of marginality of adivasis in Kerala and what is the notion of marginality that has been conceived through the efforts of this interrogation? How did they engage with the question of development? Did they make any effort to propose a new notion of development or are they merely problematising the existing idea of development through movement activism? Are they completely rejecting the existing discourses and practices of development? What is the meaning one could construct on the idea of ‘political’ when they articulate their claims and demands in the public sphere of Kerala? Finally, do the discourses that have been constructed on the themes marginality, development and political within/by these movements constitute a new agency of the adivasis? If yes, how do we understand, explain and interpret the meaning of this notion on agency? To answer these questions, the study is broadly located at the intersection of sociology, political science and anthropology informed by postcolonial studies and this framework is broadly termed as postcolonial political sociology of social movements (a detailed account of this framework has been given in the subsequent sections of this chapter).

In this study, the term contemporary is used in a specific time frame which begins from 1990. This period is marked as a disjuncture in the trajectory of the economic and



political history of India since independence. In this study, this disjuncture has been perceived in connection with the larger process of neoliberal capitalist globalization. Many authors have already taken strenuous intellectual effort to understand and decipher the qualitatively new and divergent characteristic features of this period that distinguishes it from earlier periods. Some of these authors<sup>5</sup> have attempted to capture the idiosyncratic nature of this shift in connection with globalisation. Amongst which, I perceive, the notable and distinct theoretical intervention was made by Partha Chatterjee (2004; 2008; 2008a; and 2011). However, most of these studies agreed that this shift can be mapped by looking at the changes that happened in the political, economic and social domains and institutions, and their corresponding processes. The first and most important transformations are ensued in the notions of nation state and its role in the global political context, and correspondingly the new and hegemonic role of capital and market in the economy. Similarly, the other transformations can be outlined as changes took place in the perspectives on development and corresponding reconfiguration initiated in development institutions; the significant presence of civil society and its role, although very limited in determining and shaping the socio-political agenda of the state; and the interface between the state and civil society. Above all, the period has been characterized by the powerful mobilisations of the lower castes and dalits, adivasis and other marginalised sections of the society articulating various issues such as land, natural resources, development, identity, ethnicity and region etc.

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<sup>5</sup> To name a few important are: Bagchi 1999; Kohli 2010; Ludden 2006; Stiglitz 2002; Harris 2003; Kiely and Phil Marfleet 1998; Dasgupta and Ray Kiely 2006 and Dasgupta and Jan Nederveen Pieterse 2009.

In this context, it may not be possible for a single study to undertake all the above mentioned aspects for extensive inquiry at both theoretical and empirical levels. Thus, by considering these constraints, this study principally focuses on the theme of social movements and collective actions of the people, in other words, the popular democratic mobilizations of the subordinate castes, marginalised sections such as adivasis and classes since 1990. Given these circumstances, this study considers that the claims and demands of the social movements emerged during the above mentioned period was shaped by the changes happened in the economic, political and social spheres. Predominantly, it resulted in the process of complex and divergent discourses, institutions, ideologies and practices constituted on development at different spaces such as global, national, regional and local.<sup>6</sup> To what extent it has made deeper impact on the life of underprivileged sections of the society, particularly on adivasis, is a question. Therefore, this study looks at the connection between marginality of adivasis and development at the empirical level by engaging with the discourses constructed within and by the two movements, AGMS and Plachimada.

### **Marginality of the Adivasis and Development: New Configurations**

The questions around marginality of the adivasis are bound up with the larger idea of development and politics. If we try to look at this phenomenon a little closer, we would be able to find out two important questions implied in these discourses: what constitutes the notions of development and the politics in the present juncture? How and in what

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<sup>6</sup> An elaborate account of marginality of the adivasis in connection with 'Kerala model of development', within the larger context of developmental state in India, has been done in the fourth chapter. Thus, to avoid repetition I am not discussing those aspects here in the introduction chapter.

forms these are intersected in the contemporary forms of marginality? It engenders three complex but interrelated themes: development, marginality and politics. In this context, even a perfunctory view on most of the contemporary articulations of resistance by different sections of the society, particularly the marginalised, will unravel the fact that these resistances have been engaging with the above mentioned themes at various levels and degrees. In the domain of social sciences, most often, these resistances are widely identified as civil society organizations/movements or 'new social movements'. The purpose of this study is not to merely classify or characterize these movements. Instead, the study will explore the contemporary meaning of the notions of development, marginality and the idea of political agency, and how it has been determining each other and its interrelationship by examining the emergence and constitution of the movements: AGMS and Plachimada.

AGMS and Plachimada essentially revolve around two different locally specific issues and their repertoire of contentions organised in diverse and unique forms. AGMS anchored upon the question of land in a deeper and structural sense while Plachimada movement raised the issue of water and natural resources in a much broader and democratic manner. It is interesting to analyse what is common between these two movements with respect to the question of marginality and its emphasis on the means of securing the necessities of life.

## **Postcolonial Political Sociology of Social Movements: Towards a Conceptual Framework**

Political sociology is widely conceived as a sub-discipline of sociology foregrounded on the theoretical postulation of the major themes such as politics, state, power and authority. The purpose of this section is not to historically trace the lineage of political sociology from its classical expressions found in the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Rather, I shall make an attempt to present the main theoretical assumptions of classical political sociology and its later developments and shifts as part of an effort to register the departing points of a postcolonial political sociology from this tradition. In this study, postcolonial political sociology refers to the attempts to critically revisit, redefine and to a certain extent reject the tradition of political sociology with reference to the experiences of postcolonial societies, particularly in India.

In this theoretical venture, the term postcolonial is not merely referring to the historical and political shift of the society from colonial to postcolonial or pre-independence to post independence, but more importantly mediated and positioned by incorporating the conceptual and theoretical insights of ‘postcolonial studies’ as a domain of academic inquiry. Putting more appropriately, we try to develop a political sociology mainly informed by postcolonial studies. In this context the term postcolonial presupposes a theoretical strategy that interrogates Eurocentrism, where I mainly draw the views of Dipesh Chakrabarty. He insightfully observes that “the Europe” which he seeks “to provincialise or decenter an imaginary figure that remains deeply embedded in *clichéd* and *shorthand forms* in some everyday habits of thought that invariably subtend attempts

in the social sciences to address questions of political modernity in South Asia” (2008, 3-4).

Besides, it is necessary to remember the observation made by Sanjay Seth with regard to this. According to him, Chakrabarty and many others did not just start from the premise with reference to the “dominant accounts offered by the social sciences, but the very concepts through which such accounts are fashioned, have genealogies ‘which go deep into the intellectual and even theological traditions of Europe’” (2009, 335). Therefore, “provincialising Europe,” one of the main agendas of postcolonial studies essentially meant by an attempt to “explore the capacities and limitations of certain European social and political categories in conceptualising political modernity in the context of non-European life-world” (Chakrabarty 2008, 20). Given this broader meaning of the term postcolonial in the context of social sciences, a more exhaustive meaning of the framework postcolonial political sociology concerned with social movements will be explicated in the latter parts of this chapter.<sup>7</sup>

Classical political sociology often identified the domain of politics in relation to state, government and other related formal political institutions. That is to say, they were keen in understanding the institutional manifestation of power and politics. Therefore, social is located as a separate realm not directly connected with those political institutions. Similarly, the notion on power is also confined to the above mentioned political

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<sup>7</sup> Postcolonial studies as a new interdisciplinary academic domain had set up through the writings of mainly Edward Said, Gayatri Chakrabarty Spivak and Homi Bhabha. However, recently the field has been enriched by unraveling the decolonization experiences of the British, French and Us colonialism in various parts of the world. For an interesting discussion concerned to Latin America, see Bortoluci and Jansen, 2013.

institutions. In this way, the scholars who belong to this tradition considered social movements seriously only when either they attempted to capture state power or earnestly tried to challenge existing ruling authority or power authority. Here they primarily focused on the political orientation of movements, to examine whether they are revolutionary, radical or conservative and so on.

Marxist political sociology, one of the main strands of classical political sociology revolved around its theoretical engagement mainly on four themes: politics, class, state and ideology. Instead of getting into a detailed discussion here, let me briefly elucidate the conceptual postulation concerned with these themes. The notion of politics has been recognised and defined in this tradition in connection with the economic structure of capitalism. Hence, in its view, all political contestations are determined by the structural antagonism between bourgeois classes who represented the interests of capital and the proletariat who are forced to earn their living by selling their labour. Similarly, in German Ideology Marx looked at the state as a creature of the bourgeois' economic interest. Drake observed that "Marxist political sociology takes a functional view of the state as the 'executive committee of the ruling class'" (2010, 9). When one talks about Marx's view of ideology, Bhikhu Parekh has interesting observations on it. According to him, "Marx's theory of ideology is somewhat ambiguous and confused, an exposition of it is necessarily an interpretation, and any interpretation is necessarily a form of collaboration" (1982).<sup>8</sup> Therefore, in his view, Marx's theory of ideology constitutes a concept of idealism and apologia. In this way, Parekh diligently analyses saying, for

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<sup>8</sup> This quote I have taken from the Introduction chapter of the book although the page number is not assigned for that chapter.

Marx “ideology was, not an abusive slogan to be used to discredit the opponents, nor a general term describing any organized body of beliefs, but a theoretical concept, an epistemological category designed to conceptualise a specific form of thought” (Ibid: Introduction).

On the contrary, another classical sociologist Max Weber’s political sociology interwoven with his own ideas of power, typology of legitimate forms of domination and his notions on the state. Politics was envisioned as competition for, or influence over, the distribution of power in the state and social groups in Weber’s thought. In his view, power is conceived at two levels: power as authority and power as coercion. Within this conception, authority is the legitimate expression of power. Contrary to this, coercive expression of power imposes certain force on other people to make them act. Subsequently, Weber classified the authority into three such as *charismatic*, *traditional* and *rational legal authority*. Amongst which the latter was considered as the most legitimate one which refers to “resting on a belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right that elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands” (Weber 1978, 215). In fact, in Weber’s discourse the above described authority was regarded as nation state in the modern society that has acquired the legitimate control of power and force over a given territory and the people residing in it. Here it is of vital importance to look at how the notion of politics has been presupposed in these discussions. As Peter Breiner writes, for Weber, “politics becomes the striving ‘for a share of power or to influence the distribution of power, whether between states or between the groups of people contained within a state.’ So that “we pursue power either for the prestige of having power to realize goals separate from it, but in politics we never escape the striving for power”

(Weber 1919, 33; also 1978 [1922], 16 Cited in Breiner 2012, 17). It is clear from this reading that Weber also perceived politics only with reference to the dominant and legitimate authority of the modern state.

Another tradition of theory can be located in the trajectory of political sociology which was termed as elite theory. Italian sociologist and political scientist, Vilfred Pareto, Gaetano Mosca (another Italian political scientist) and the German sociologist Robert Michels represented elite theory in the early twentieth century. Drake considers Pareto's tradition of political sociology as a counter to Marxian theory. The central assumptions of elite theory are that 'State' occupies a pivotal role in this theory and attempted to explicate the power relationships in those societies. This theory suggests that a small minority which mainly constituted by the economic elites and members involved in the policy-planning networks detaining most of the power. In other words, "society is ruled over by a minority which changes over time, either in internal factional struggles between interest groups, through recruitment from wider society, or as the replacement of one elite by another" (Drake 2010, 10).

The above discussion indicates a clear separation of political, social and economic as three distinct and autonomous entities, in which political, subsumed in the traditional institutionalized meaning, acquired an over privilege in the conventional domain of political sociology. This neat and strict compartmentalisation has been problematised in the recent conceptual innovations and reconfigurations suggested in the terrain of post-structuralism, post-Marxism, cultural anthropology and postcolonial studies. Hence, I argue in this chapter that the conceptualization evolved in the classical and conventional political sociology concerned with the themes such as political, state, power, ideology



and the social are inadequate to understand and conceptualise contemporary social movements. Therefore, postcolonial political sociology establishes its departure from the conventional tradition of political sociology by incorporating nuanced theoretical understanding of the concepts of power, politics, state, governance and the notion of the social and the political into its framework informed by the experiences of non-Western societies. Consequently, social movement and collective action have acquired great significance and value as potential themes of inquiry in the analytical landscape of postcolonial political sociology. It is worth mentioning here the observation made by Michael Drake about the significance of social movements in politicizing the social. According to him, “social movements have thus played a major part in resituating the parameters of the political by politicizing the social” (2010, 4). In such a way, it essentially interrogates the mutual exteriority theoretically attributed among the notions on ‘social’ and ‘political’. Most often, especially in the postcolonial context of India, social movements articulate their claims on behalf of common people, especially the disadvantaged and marginalised sections of the society and seeking to accomplish their claims through state intervention. Basically these attempts are not meant to capture the state power, rather to negotiate and pressurise the institutions of the state to respond more favourably and supportively to the demands raised by them.

The primary purpose of explaining the basic assumptions of postcolonial political sociology is to engage with the recent conceptualization of themes such as political, social, state, civil society, power and social movements in the domain of social sciences in India. Partha Chatterjee has made an important contribution in this regard. His sustained intellectual efforts in critically analyzing and problematising the genealogy of

the normative status of Western liberal political thought by gaining a firm foothold in the experiences of postcolonial democracy offers a great intellectual possibility to look at our state, politics, and also social movements from a fresh standpoint. To quote Chatterjee:

how was it possible, I have asked myself, that all the bitter and bloody struggles over colonial exploitation, racial discrimination, class conflict, the suppression of women, the marginalisation of minority cultures, etc., that have dominated the real history of the modern world in the last hundred years or so, have managed not to displace in even the slightest way the stable location of modern political theory within the abstract discursive space of normative reasoning? How is it that normative political theory was never pushed into constructing a theory of the nation, or of gender, or of race, or indeed of class, except by marginal figures whose efforts were greeted at best with bare courtesy, and more often with open hostility? (2011, 3).

Similarly, Sudipta Kaviraj (2003; 2010 and 2011), says that enquiry on post-colonial Indian state and politics must begin from the analysis of the experiences of colonialism. As he rightly pointed out that Indian state is not merely the outcome of independence but its roots can be located in the discourses constituted much before that and post-colonial state as the manifestation of the most powerful collective agency. Here, political means the collective experience of about one-third of the non-Western world. Therefore, he looks at Indian state and politics from a long term historical perspective.

In his book, *The Imaginary Institutions of India* (2010) Kaviraj argues that “the ‘sovereignty’ of the state was two layered. Often, there existed a distant, formally all-encompassing, empire, but actual political suffering was caused on an everyday basis by neighbourhood tyrants” (12). In this analysis he actually captures the historical and cultural specificity of the Indian state both in the colonial and post-colonial circumstances. Accordingly, the notion and practice of politics is operating both explicitly and implicitly in these layers as he states that “state, or the upper layers of it,

which the colonial and the national regimes saw themselves as historically succeeding, sat in the middle of a peculiar segmentary of social arrangements”. He terms this particular arrangement by using a Hegelian metaphor as “a circle of circles”. That means, he interprets, “each circle formed by a community of a neighbourhood mix of caste, religious denomination, and occupation. The state would occupy”, by extending the metaphor, he says, “a kind of high ground in the middle of this circle of circles”. In this way, “it enjoyed great ceremonial eminence, but in fact it had rather limited powers to interfere with the social segment’s internal organisation” (12). This view entails an attempt to establish a relative autonomy of the ‘social’ or social space in similar way subaltern studies devised the idea of social specifically in the initial five volumes. It could be argued that indeed, this circular model of state-society relations occupies its theoretical eminence and appropriateness rather than the linear hierarchical model of state-society relations in the context of India.

Later, he made a distinction between the formation of European and Indian state where he observes, “in Europe, the state did ‘intervene’ in a society whose basic structures had earlier been formed by civil society, and the existence of a strong civil society made the state act responsible ways”. But in the case of India, “there was no prior civil society, one could hardly talk of an interventionist state since many of those institutions were brought into existence by the state” (28). However, a major limitation of these essays, as Neera Chandoke (2010) rightly pointed out, that it is not attempting to capture the fundamental changes happened in Indian state, politics and society since 1990. This is a significant period in the recent social and political history of India as a result of the four major events: Mandal Commission recommendations and its consequences; the state power

obtained by caste based political parties at sub-national levels; the ascendancy of Hindutva forces at the centre; and a shift of the country towards liberalization and globalization pathway.

Whereas, Partha Chatterjee (2008) attempted to examine and conceptualise the fundamental changes in postcolonial India since the latter half of 1980s. Through this essay he revisits the “basic structures of power in Indian society, especially the position of the peasantry” (53). Analysing the status of peasant society in contemporary India, he examines how the new forms of post-colonial capitalism is operating in India. In order to understand this, he critically revisits the prior theoretical traditions of subaltern studies and Gramscian framework. This conceptual shift was essentially grounded on the five major shifts that he explained in the essay which can be briefly outlined as: firstly, “the spread of governmental technologies in India in the last three decades...” and its further consequences in various fields; secondly, the strategies of the peasant politics are necessitated a change due to the “reforms since 1950s in the structure of agrarian property, even though gradual and piecemeal...”. Thirdly, “...the relation of the state to the peasantry is no longer directly extractive, as it often was in the past”. In the fourth point, he talks about the peasant migration to the cities. In his view, as a result of the “rapid growth of cities and industrial regions” the peasants are making voluntary choice when they decide to shift to urban cities and non-agricultural occupation. This is incorrect observation as far as the peasants’ migration to urban spaces is concerned, especially in the era of neo-liberal globalisation. By contrast to the voluntary choice, they are compelled to migrate to urban cities and opt non-agricultural occupation as a consequence of the capitalist expansion and accumulation to the rural areas. However, it

may be true that few of them are making this as an opportunity to obtain new educational avenues and also to come out of the rigid caste hierarchy. But the inequality between rural and urban has been exacerbated as a result of the introduction of neoliberal economic policies since 1990 (See for instance, Chandrashekhar and Jayati Ghosh 2002; Deshpande 2004; Gupta 2005; Harriss-White 1996; Jodhka 1994; 2014 and 2016; Sen 1997; and Kumar 2016). Then, he presents a more problematic argument that it cannot be seen as their “pauperisation and forcible separation from the land” (54). Finally, he was discussing the impact of “school education” and “widespread modern communications media” on the life of the rural peasantry in India.

Chatterjee, by drawing from Kalyan Sanyal’s analysis of ‘primitive accumulation’ from his book *Rethinking Capitalist Development*, gives prominence to his argument that “primitive accumulation as well as a parallel process of the reversal of the effects of primitive accumulation” (55). Through this he resolutely revisited his own<sup>9</sup> as well as Sudipta Kaviraj’s (1988) previous exposition concerned with the framework of ‘passive revolution’ applied mainly to explain the emergence of the postcolonial state in India. Further, he argues that “passive revolution is still valid for India. But its structure and dynamics have undergone change”. Under these circumstances, he views, “the capitalist class has come to acquire a position of moral-political hegemony over civil society, consisting principally of the urban middle classes”. Therefore, he argues:

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<sup>9</sup> An elaborated conceptual elucidation of the idea of ‘passive revolution’ and its application can be seen in Chatterjee’s two major works (1986; 1998) and another joint work with Arup Mallik which was originally published three months before the declaration of Emergency in India in 1975 and included one of his later collected essays (1997).

There is a new dynamic logic that ties the operations of political society with the hegemonic role of the bourgeoisie in civil society and its dominance over the state structure as a whole. This logic is supplied by the requirement, explained earlier, of reversing the effects of primitive accumulation of capital (57).

Through these efforts, Chatterjee attempted to offer more clarity to his conceptual innovation of ‘political society’ that appeared for the first time in great detail in his earlier work titled *Politics of the Governed* (2004). In this work, he sets out the critical enquiry of concepts such as civil society and political society; state and governmentality; and citizen and population etc by constantly referring to the ontology of the postcolonial societies, especially India. Further, all these theoretical and political explorations ruminate about the tension between universal affiliations and particular identities. Therefore, one can identify that introspectively he moved away in instigating the Universalist ideals of nationalism and perceives to uphold those ideals as “morally illegitimate”. He also asserts that it becomes morally illegitimate, if we are not “...simultaneously demanding that the politics spawned by governmentality be recognised as an equally legitimate part of the real time-space of the modern political life of the nation” (2004, 25). Indeed, it is an indubitable fact that Chatterjee’s exploration concerned with the above mentioned concepts and themes, and broadly the specificity of Indian democratic politics, offers new theoretical insights in framing a postcolonial political sociology of social movements in the contemporary context. This exercise will be carried further by not indiscriminately and uncritically drawing from Partha Chatterjee, rather through a careful critical scrutiny of his conceptualisation. Therefore, it is worth mentioning some of the serious deficiencies with reference to his conceptualization of political society pointed out by a number of scholars. Before

embarking on that task let me briefly sketch his main ideas of political society in the following.

Chatterjee developed his idea of ‘political society’ at greater length for the first time in his book titled *The Politics of the Governed* (2004). In this work, the political society is conceived in opposition to civil society and the latter signifies an elite construct. In order to grapple the meaning of political society it is necessary to be familiar with the distinction he is making between ‘citizen’ and ‘population’ by mainly drawing from the studies on “governmentalisation of the state” conceptualized by Foucault. According to him, population does not have status of citizens and merely considered as subjects and objects of policy. In the context of a modern developmental state, population is the “suitable targets for administrative, legal, economic, or electoral policy” (37). Even though formally identified every one as a citizen with equal rights in reference to constitutional state and law, Chatterjee identifies that in actual practice they are only populations. Therefore, population has not been considered as “proper members of civil society and are not regarded as such by the institutions of the state” (Ibid). On the contrary, citizen as a right bearing group though numerically very less identified with civil society. In brief, Chatterjee’s conceptualization of political society and civil society has built on the categories of citizen and population. Now let us turn to look at how the idea of political society proposed by him in the light of this discussion.

In the case of civil society, he refers to the Hegelian and Marxian tradition and revives their idea of civil society as bourgeois society. By extending this idea into the context of India and its political modernity he argues, “Civil society then, restricted to a small section of culturally equipped citizens...”. On the other hand, political society is the

terrain of population where one could see “the proliferation of forms of political mobilisation by underprivileged communities that violate law and are opposed to the civic norms of good citizenship” (39). In this way, the category population is constituted by the rural and urban poor, including marginal peasants, marginalised communities like dalits and adivasis, street vendors, squatters etc. Later, by advancing his arguments, Chatterjee articulates that “civil society is where corporate capital is hegemonic, whereas political society is the space of management of non-corporate capital”. That means, since 1990s, “corporate capital, and along with it the class of corporate capitalists, have achieved a hegemonic position over civil society” (2008, 58). In fact, by presenting the idea of political society, Chatterjee aimed to propose a novel framework in order to understand the popular politics of the disadvantaged and marginalized sections of the society, particularly emerged since the latter half of 1980s. Certainly, it contributes significantly to our attempt to develop a postcolonial political sociology perspective of social movements. I consider understanding and conceptualising contemporary social movements is an essential part of a larger effort to theorising the present.<sup>10</sup> If we conceive the project in that fashion, it is important to briefly review how this idea has been received in the academic domain of social sciences, particularly in India, and its implications in the study of social movements. Therefore, the rest of this section is portrayed as an attempt to extract the substance of the major critiques put forward against Chatterjee’s conceptualization of political society, and the working of structures of power and capital in the present postcolonial society.

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<sup>10</sup> I am indebted to John and Deshpande (2008) for this usage.



The first serious attempts to engage with Partha Chatterjee's above described conceptualisation were brought out as three different essays by Mihir Shah; Mary John and Satish Deshpande; and Amita Baviskar and Nandini Sundar in the journal of Economic and Political Weekly in late 2008. They all commonly recognised the full worth of his intellectual efforts to conceptualise the present. However, they were all equally disappointed with the essay: *Democracy and Economic Transformation in India*. Let me point out some common critiques they all raised against him. Firstly, he looks at the structures of power in the contemporary India only in terms of class, while he overlooks the multiple axes of power and domination such as caste, tribe and gender. Secondly, all of them pointed out the inadequacy of empirical data (thin rather than thick description) and inattentiveness in drawing generalizations and conclusions out of it.

Amongst the critics, Mihir Shah forcefully argues that Chatterjee's "characterisation of power" seems completely inappropriate with reference to the actually existing empirical reality of contemporary India. In order to substantiate this argument, he problematised Chatterjee's observations on adivasis, peasantry, governmentality, postcolonial capitalism and state. In the case of peasantry, particularly in the post-1990s, Shah, in disagreement with Chatterjee, presents an opposite picture. He argues that "the conflict of the peasantry with the landlords-moneylenders-traders became even more acute" as a result of the "new privatization-centered policy regime" (2008, 79). Further, in engaging with both Chatterjee's and Sanyal's arguments on governmentality or governmentalisation of the state, Shah observes it as an old phenomenon as old as capitalism itself. Consequently, he argues, "governmentality is, if anything, in a crisis rather than becoming more active in reaching the rural poor, the welfare and development state appears to be in decisive

retreat” (80). Here, Shah once again emphasised the argument of the withdrawal of state and the hegemony of market and corporate capital in the post-1990 period, and also questioned the characterisation of adivasis which has been done by Chatterjee.

In another response, Mary John and Satish Deshpande questioned the validity of Chatterjee’s propositions concerned with the functioning of postcolonial capitalism. As I mentioned earlier, Chatterjee, by following Kalyan Sanyal, argues that postcolonial capital is operating in a twofold manner in which one indicates the process of primitive accumulation and the other points to the reversal process of primitive accumulation. Indeed, John and Deshpande are skeptical about the validity of this thesis. Hence, they pose a couple of questions through which they ask how far this has been accomplished on the ground. “Is this happening? Are palliative measures actually successful in undoing processes of dispossession and pauperisation? Is original accumulation actually being reversed?” (2008, 84). By revisiting original Marxist idea of *primitive* or *original accumulation*, they state that three basic components constitute this process according to Marxist theory. They are:

- a) Creation of the wage worker through processes of dispossession which cut-off access to the means of production; b) creation of the capitalist via processes of concentration of capital and the internalization of market discipline; c) as a combined result of both (a) and (b), the creation, spread and sustenance of capitalism (85).

Given this, they problematised Chatterjee’s argument that he is only concerned about (a) and abandoned (b) and (c). In their view, his arguments with reference to the primitive accumulation in the agrarian situation of contemporary India are not seriously looking at the “rich literature on the development of capitalism in Indian agriculture”. Therefore,

one can make arguments in relation to “incremental” changes. However, this is insufficient to talk about the larger trajectory of the working of capitalism in the Indian agriculture. Against this backdrop, they assertively put: Chatterjee’s essay is “too narrowly economistic in its interpretation of primitive accumulation” (Ibid).

In the third response, Baviskar and Sundar, generally agreeing with many of the observations Chatterjee has made in connection with the contemporary Indian political economy, present their suspicion about the overall conceptual apparatus used by him. According to them, they are firmly foregrounded on a number of structural oppositions. For that reason, they raise a question “why he uses the term corporate and non-corporate as against simply capital and mercantile capital” (2008, 88). Similarly, they are not fully convinced with Chatterjee’s division of civil and political society. Hence, they have reported a number of counter empirical examples from the Indian rural society to problematise the binary between civil and political society. They write: “civil society is thus not a domain of hegemony as Chatterjee describes, but of domination. Its attempts to make economic liberalization the common sense of our times are accompanied by brutal state repression and the anomalous exercise of law”. Simultaneously, they argue that “the category of political society is inadequate for describing the variety of social formations that stand ranged against or collusion with the corporate and urban middle classes” (89). In short, they conclude this essay by reminding that the categories like civil society and political, as Chatterjee proposed, is inadequate to grapple with the nature of domination happening in contemporary India.

It is imperative here to bring another set of scholarly engagements with the conceptualisation of political and civil society which was collated by Ajay Gudavarty

(2012). Here, I am only referring to the conceptual engagement with reference to the idea of political and civil society initiated by Swagato Sarkar. He observes that Chatterjee's project is dominated by a combination of three elements that are the "defense of communal way of life, mapping the differentiated political space, and a suspicion towards constitutionalism" (31). Then he interrogates Chatterjee's attempt to map the differentiated political space on the basis of a communal way of life, and argues that this conceptualisation "has not been *ultimately* significant enough for Chatterjee to develop a theory of Indian/post-colonial democracy," but at the same time Sarkar admits the importance of "transgression of law, rules and norms in India has to be accepted" (44). Therefore, one can see that his position towards Chatterjee's political society composed of twin approaches: one is descriptive assessment and second is normative evaluation. At the descriptive and empirical level, he finds the importance of the concept of political society in order to emphasize "the undecidability and aporetic conditions present in constitutionalism and in the process of realization of rights, justice and freedom, which provides a critique of the liberal theory of democracy, that is, it shows the limit of democracy under the capitalist system".

On the other hand, he does not see any significance of the concept of political society to "undertake any normative evaluation of the empirical context and proclaim that it helps in realizing the rights and freedom of members of political society" (44). In the backdrop of this discussion, Sarkar presents his central argument that the concept of political is more useful "as a critique of Indian politics, rather than an alternative normative theory, which can only extend the criteria of recognition by the state" (46). Here Chatterjee recognises one of the predominant features of Indian politics as the capitalist expansion

through primitive accumulation and reversal of this process. However, Sarkar, by concluding his engagement with the idea of political society forcefully, articulates:

the concept of political society does not denote a positive political development, this is, it does not present a possibility for ‘substantially redefining property and law’ in favour of subaltern people/classes or the ‘actual expansion of the freedoms of the people’... (31).

This debate invokes some significant implications in envisaging a postcolonial political sociology of social movements. The first concern is how to understand the connection between multiple axes of power and social movement activism in India? Secondly, how to conceptualise the different modes of politics articulated through movement activism in conjunction with contemporary form of state and postcolonial capitalism? Thirdly, how do we make sense of the agency of marginalized people and movement actors while interacting with developmentalism? Against the backdrop of the above discussion let me abstract and restate the major theoretical presuppositions:

A postcolonial political sociology perceives social movement activism as primarily ‘political’ and also their efforts in the politicisation of the social. In fact, it transcends the mutual exteriority between the domain of social and political. In this context, the term ‘political’ has been used by following Mouffe’s (2005) agonistic conception of it. Thus, I take her conceptual distinction between the term ‘political’ and ‘politics’. In her view, the term ‘political’ constitutes “the space of power, conflict and antagonism”. Further, it refers to “the dimension of antagonism which [is] constitutive of human societies” whereas, the term ‘politics’ indicates “the set of practices and institutions through which an order is created, organising human coexistence in the context of conflictuality provided

by the political” (2005, 9). Similarly, in the case of adivasis, social predominantly constitutes marginality and suffering of the community on everyday basis.

Now, when we turn to the notion of power it is worth mentioning Foucault’s remarks on power that put forward in his essay *The Subject and Power* (1982). This essay provides a better understanding of Foucault’s notion of power particularly in his later works. He observes that power does not exist “in a concentrated or diffused form” universally. He elaborates this point by observing that “power exists only when it is put into action, even if, of course, it is integrated into a desperate field of possibilities brought to bear upon permanent structures” (788). This formulation of power was specifically grounded on the experiences of fascism and Stalinism. Therefore, he rightly invokes that the question of power is “not only a theoretical question” but an inevitable part of their experience (779). In this context, he looks at the different dimensions of power in the process of how human beings are transformed as “subjects”. According to Foucault, the state’s power has two significant aspects in which one is the form of “individualizing” and the other is its “totalizing” form. Later, he argues that “state is a modern matrix of individualization, or a new form of pastoral power”.<sup>11</sup>

Mark Haugaard (2010) emphasised the eminence of Foucault’s notion of power when compared to two broadly contrasting perceptions of power: one, power as domination and the other, power in terms of empowerment. In his view, “the followers of Weber, most notably Dahl (1957) and Lukes (2005; 2008)” represent the earlier perception of power. On the other hand, thinkers such as “Arendt (1970), Parsons (1967), Barnes (1988) and

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<sup>11</sup> For an elaborate discussion on what Foucault meant by new form of pastoral power in the context of modern state, see his essay *The Subject and Power* (1982).

Morriss (2002), view power in terms of empowerment, or the capacity to act. In this perspective, power constitutes the core of agency as ability” (1051). In this context, Foucault made an attempt to go beyond this dichotomy by incorporating both the aspects in his notion of power. Thus Haugaard (2010) argues that for Foucault (1979; 1980; 1981; and 2008), “power is constitutive of agency” and similarly “his insistence on critique of all forms of power suggests, that he equates power with domination” (1051). Agreeing with Mark Haugaard, I believe that the two perspectives above noted on power – “should not be interpreted as an either/or phenomenon and instead as a both/and” – is highly significant in the context of a postcolonial political sociology. Hence, “what we mean by power covers a cluster of concepts and phenomena, which include both domination and agency, and power over and power to” (Ibid). This conceptualization of power will be useful in the discussion of social movements from the vantage point of a postcolonial political sociology. At this moment, it is also pertinent to briefly refer Foucault’s observations on struggles against power. According to him, three types of social struggles against power may happen in isolation with each other or combined together in all modern societies.<sup>12</sup> In agreement to this, a postcolonial political sociology recognises multiple axes of power or structures of power in contemporary Indian society in regard to caste, class, tribe, ethnicity, gender and region etc.

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<sup>12</sup> He puts it this way: “generally, it can be said that there are three types of struggles: either against forms of domination (ethnic, social, and religious); against forms of exploitation which separate individuals from what they produce; or against that which ties the individual to himself and submits him to others in this way (struggles against subjection, against forms of subjectivity and submission)” (1982, 781).

With reference to the state, postcolonial political sociology endorses the view of Kaviraj that any fruitful enquiry on post-colonial Indian state and politics must begin from the analysis of the experiences of colonialism. Further, it underpins the view that “postcolonial state is contradictory and indecisive in its conduct...” (Sarkar 2012, 40). And, sometimes the state is also pragmatic in its approach. Hence, it refers to the postcolonial predicament of the state that embodies power relationship (Ibid). Indian society also witnessed the withdrawal of the state and hegemony of the market and corporate capital in the post 1990. Paradoxically, there is another trend which exemplifies a number of instances where the state manifests its increasingly assertive nature.<sup>13</sup> For instance, “neoliberal governmentality” has become central characteristic feature of the contemporary Indian state.

From the discussion above, it is clear that initially Sudipta Kaviraj and later Partha Chatterjee attempted to conceive civil and political society as different and distinct entity in terms of civility and legality, which I construe as a wrong and misleading reading. Therefore, postcolonial political sociology is not holding that distinction as such, and attempts to go beyond the binary of political and social. Taking this into account, I will examine the meaning of the concepts marginality, development and agency through the lens of postcolonial political sociology in the next section.

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<sup>13</sup> Muthanga incident is a case in point here. The adivasis under the leadership of AGMS occupied the Muthanga Wild Life Sanctuary in Kerala in February 2003. This was a protest against the delay in accomplishing the promises, especially the allotment of 5 acres of land for each landless adivasi families offered by the state in an agreement with AGMS in 2001. But on February 19, 2003, the police force of the Kerala state fired against the protesters and brutally suppressed the agitators. In this police firing, one Adivasi was killed and so many people were severely injured and one police personnel also killed (For a more details, see Chapter 5 of this study).



## **Marginality, Development and Agency: Thinking Through Postcolonial Political Sociology**

As I mentioned earlier, this study is woven on three themes – *marginality*, *development* and *agency* – in the context of AGMS and Plachimada as two contemporary social movements. My deeper engagement with the field helped me to recognise the importance of these three concepts. Subsequently, with these empirical insights, and reflection on the academic scholarship, I was able to decipher the conceptual meanings encapsulated in the postcolonial political sociology framework. A detailed discussion on the three concepts is provided below:

### ***Marginality***

Although the meanings of marginality vary across disciplines, in this study, I mainly draw from the disciplinary boundary of sociology. The terms such as ‘marginality’, ‘marginal’, ‘margin’, and ‘marginalisation’ have been widely used in sociological accounts as descriptive categories rather than analytical concepts. Indeed, the condition of marginality implies a spatial connotation which is expressed through the term ‘margin’. Often, margin is conceived in relation to centre within the frontiers of a spatial organisation. This spatial organisation includes “the global level of international relations to the local level of an internal structure of a given country’s regions or other smaller territorial units” (Zarycki 2007, 110). While analyzing the upland transformations, and also the relationship between upland and lowland in terms of marginality, Li (2005) draws theoretical insights from three different studies (Burling 1965; Shields 1991 and Tsing, 1993), and suggests three implications. Firstly, “uplands and lowlands are brought

within a single analytical frame, and treated as one integrated system”. As per this view, “margins are an essential part of the whole, not separate, complete objects of study in themselves”. Secondly, “marginality is clearly a relational concept, involving a social construction, not merely a natural one”. Finally, “there is an obvious asymmetry between margin and centre: the two do not stand in a relationship of two equal parts of an encompassing whole”. In other words, marginality cannot be seen without referring to power (1-2).<sup>14</sup>

Considering this understanding on power, let me discuss the notion of marginality with reference to the empirical context. Li (2005, 10) has observed that “the question of marginality is always an empirical one; it has to do with hegemonic claims and their local resonances, refractions and outcomes”. Keane (1997, 38-39) makes a similar point: “To the extent that people understand themselves to be “marginal”, or simply “local”, they may be accepting at least some of the authority that makes somewhere else – the capital city, the nation, the state, the global economy – a proper, even foundational, frame of reference”. In general terms, the adivasi life has been considered as a site associated with marginal since many perceive it as socially, economically and physically removed from mainstream, and also “traditional”, undeveloped and ‘backward in comparison to other communities and societies. A prominent presupposition implied in this notion of marginality is that it has been constituted ‘naturally.’ Rather than accepting marginality of the adivasis as a natural fact, I seek here to locate the constitution of marginality

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<sup>14</sup> The meaning of power in terms of a postcolonial political sociology perspective has been discussed in the previous section in great detail.

historically, and in specific socio-economic and political processes associated with development discourses, practices, institutional engagements and ideology.

In the post-colonial period, the state interventions in the domain of adivasis life have become increasingly framed through a discourse of marginality and the need for “development.” In brief, the study considers, akin to Tsing’s (1993, 90) observation, marginality as always “an ongoing relationship with power” (Cited in Murray Li 2005, 2). In addition, this marginality implied misrecognition or non-recognition and it also entails multiple forms of subordination and oppression. Based on this account, I envisage marginality with multiple dimensions which can be illustrated as spatial, social, cultural and political marginalities. Marginality has also been perceived in this study as a site of resistance by drawing insights from postcolonial political sociology. In short, this study considers marginality as a condition, and the process of marginalization as a constitutive feature of the development of capitalism. In other words, the study perceives marginality as resulting from the developmental process. This theoretical contour of marginality can be extended to view the life world of adivasis as margins in connection with the local, regional, national and global as centres of power, either shifting from local to global or replacing one another, corresponding to the specific context of post-colonial capitalism.

### ***Development***

The concept and idea of development is always contested similar to the ideas of democracy, secularism, freedom and social justice. According to Escobar, development has been conceived during the period from early post-war years till the end of 1970s mainly as a “matter of capital, technology, and education and the appropriate policy and

planning mechanism to successfully combine these elements” (1992, 20). Agreeing with Escobar, I do consider that “the post-world war II discourse of development is firmly entrenched in Western modernity and economy” (22). However, it is an undeniable fact that the trajectory of development in India has its own specificity and distinction when compared with the West. Thus, the study also locates the idea and practice of development with reference to postcolonial capitalism within the larger context of ‘our modernity’ or Indian modernity. Indeed, here I am concerned and partly informed about the intellectual precariousness in using the term modernity. For that reason, it is imperative to explicate how modernity has been conceived in the present study. I perceive modernity, as Chakrabarty (2011) mentioned, not as an “exclusivist and judgmental pretention.” This study contrasts with one of the dominant perspectives on modernity that is, “modernity is a single, homogeneous process and can be traced to a single causal principle.”

The perspective that attempted to look at modernity as a single and homogenous process has also been insightfully critiqued by Kaviraj (2000, 137), referring to modernity as a plurality of social, economic and political processes. Hence, a general meaning of modernity can be drawn from its features which are discerned as: “capitalist industrialization, the increasing centrality of the state in the social order, urbanization, individuation, secularisation in politics and ethics, the creation of a new order of knowledge”, basic restructuring in the “organisation of family and intimacy”, and “changes in the fields of artistic and literary culture” (Kaviraj 2005, 508). However, the content, assemblage and constitution of each of these processes might be different from one society to another society. The condition of modernity (includes social, economic,

political and cultural) progressively produced further changes in the society subjecting itself to constant transformations. As an extension of these discussions, Gupta offers more conceptual clarity of modernity as below:

Modernity may have been instituted as a global phenomenon through colonial capitalism, but it was, in the process, resisted, reinvented, and reconfigured in different social and historical locations. To emphasize the multivalent genealogies of “modernity” in colonial and postcolonial settings, therefore, is to emphasize that the “non-Western is not just a residual trace of a vanishing “tradition” but a constitutive feature of *modern life*” (2000, 9).

In this backdrop, the present study situates development with reference to postcolonial capitalism in the broader terrain of modernity.

### ***Agency***

The concept agency entails a much deeper theoretical connotation compared to the other two concepts: marginality and development. The meaning of agency has been widely contested in academic scholarship, particularly within feminist theories. The liberal notion of agency which was dominated in the social sciences for a long time has been mainly rooted in Western political philosophy. This was mainly grounded on the ideas of early enlightenment thinkers like John Locke, Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). My attempt here, however, is not to bring all the complex debate surrounding the term agency. Instead, I wanted to explicate what is at stake when I talk about agency, particularly adivasis agency in the context of social movements. Let me briefly explicate the major assumptions of liberal political theory and political philosophy concerned to the idea of agency. The traditions of Western liberal political thought identified agency as always with rational, autonomous individuals. Consequently, agency is conceived in a much reductive sense to indicate the execution of

intentional actions. In other words, it denotes an individual's capacity to act with a definite purpose. The notion of self is an inevitable aspect of liberal notion on individual and agency.

There have been a number of academic and political efforts in the last two decades to offer a re-conceptualisation of agency by mainly problematising the liberal notions embedded in it. This sub theme on agency refers to the noted contributions made by the feminist scholars such as Judith Butler (1990; 2013), Nancy Fraser (1995; 2013), Saba Mahmood (2001; 2005) and Lois McNay (2008; Forthcoming). These scholars have significantly contributed to the conceptualisation of agency in general, although they engaged with specific reference to the agency of women. McNay pointed out that agency is conceived within feminist scholarship at two levels, one is a descriptive category and the other is a normative category. Thus, feminist thought has always been carrying this tension between its descriptive and normative modes. I take a general idea from the discussions of the above mentioned scholars to expand the domain of a postcolonial political sociology approach towards agency, and assert that any description of agency must be located in its social and cultural context. Putting it differently, agency cannot be separated from its social and cultural terrain. In particular, the observations of McNay on common public and their agency provide insights in analysing adivasis agency in the contemporary context. She writes: "if individuals are to be understood to be more than docile subjects and passive bearers of pre-given social roles, then purposive agency must be a fundamental and self-evident property of personhood" (2015, 40). Although she presents this notion at an individual realm, I find its immense possibility to extend this idea in the community context of adivasis in Kerala.

Foregrounded on the critique of liberal perspective on agency in general and its notion on sovereign actor in particular, feminists as well as many other scholars are in a wider agreement on an important aspect of agency. They perceive:

Agency needs to be rethought as a situated embodied and relational phenomenon. The situatedness of agency denotes the idea, discussed earlier that while it has a universal potential, the substantive content and form of action is unthinkable outside specific cultural and social contexts (42).

Similarly, Saba Mahmood's feminist anthropological postulation – she invokes this idea when she studies women mosque movement in Egypt – as an attempt to critique the normative political subject of poststructuralist feminist theory is also highly relevant to the present study. She writes:

The normative political subject of poststructuralist feminist theory often remains a liberatory one, whose agency is conceptualized on the binary model of subordination and subversion. In doing so, this scholarship elides dimensions of human action whose ethical and political status does not map onto the logic of repression and resistance. In order to grasp these modes of action indebted to other reasons and histories, I will suggest that it is crucial to detach the notion of agency from the goals of progressive politics (2005, 14).

Hence, these two conceptual insights on agency are quite useful for me in examining the agency of the adivasis constructed within AGMs and Plachimada social movement activism. Therefore, this study examines whether adivasis agency is linked to the existing power relations and domination in connection with their subalternity<sup>15</sup>. An attempt has been made to look at the discourses constructed around the notion of agency within/by the social movements regarding community and culture without valorizing or uncritically embracing it.

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<sup>15</sup> Here the term subalternity refers to a “condition of subordination brought about by colonization or other forms of economic, social, racial, linguistic and/or cultural dominance” (Beverley 1999, 1).

Thus, it is possible to observe that since the advent of colonialism, the everyday life of adivasis in Kerala has been thoroughly transformed. In the postcolonial condition, both in the state's official discourse and popular discourse, adivasi life is negatively associated with backwardness (economic and educational), poverty, ignorance, alcoholism, absence of modern agrarian practices and insufficient infrastructure and institutional facilities such as road, transportation, health centres, schools etc. Contrary to this, some of the academic discourses positively associate adivasi life by valorizing community life, their economic practices, indigeneity, and broadly their distinct cultural practices. I find both the views are equally problematic since it does not capture the complexity of their life in the present juncture. Instead of accepting or rejecting either of these views, I locate myself in a third position informed by a postcolonial political sociology to critically revisit the present condition of adivasis by engaging with the two movements.

## **Methodology**

The study is primarily undertaken within the broad terrain of qualitative research. Two specific movements – AGMS and Plachimada – have been selected for this study. Theoretically this study is foregrounded in the framework of a postcolonial political sociology of social movements. Hence, different from the conventional movement studies, which usually pay great deal of attention to the internal dynamics of the social movements – mobilisational aspects, organisation and strategies – the present study looks into three themes: *marginality*, *development* and *agency* emanated from the discourses of AGMS and Plachimada. Therefore, discourse analysis has been used as an important methodological strategy to analyse the empirical data. Here the term 'discourse' is conceived in a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect



of the world). In this study, the concept discourse is executed mainly by following the post-Marxist theory of discourse developed by Laclau and Mouffe (1985). According to Laclau, discourse is a “structure in which meaning is constantly negotiated and constructed” (1988, 254). Howarth and Stavrakakis (2000) write, “discourse theory assumes that all objects and actions are meaningful, and that their meaning is conferred by historically specific systems of rules” (2). According to them, each discourse is a “social and political construction that establishes a system of relations between different objects and practices, while providing (subject) positions with which social agents can identify” (3). Further, discourse analysis “refers to the practice of analyzing empirical raw materials and information as discursive forms” (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000, 4). As per this method, the researcher “treat a wide range of linguistic and non-linguistic data – speeches, reports, manifestos, historical events, interviews, policies, ideas, even organizations and institutions – as ‘texts’ or ‘writing’ (40). In this context, “empirical data are viewed as sets of signifying practices that constitute a “discourse” and its “reality”, thus providing the conditions which enable subjects to experience the world of objects, words and practices (4). Following this, the present study considers discourse as a social and political practice which carries the actors’ perceptions, ways of thinking, meaning making, and broadly the constitution of knowledge. Thus, we believe, the claims and demands of the movement is produced in the form of various movement discourses that can be located in different sources like the documents including manifestos, leaflets, pamphlets, handouts, notices, articles written by the leaders etc. In this context, it is pertinent to unpack those discourses to understand the different dimensions of meanings of the above mentioned three themes and its intricate connections. This unpacking

process is termed as discourse analysis in the present study. Usually, discourse is being analysed not in connection with who said what, rather concerning under which conditions those opinions and statements obtaining a specific truth value, and by which looking into the capacity of being uttered. But, here we approach the analysis of discourse in a somewhat modified frame where the voice of the agent/actor or informant is equally significant similar to that of the conditions under which those voices are made available.

Keeping the above methodological framework, the present study collected data from the leaders of these movements, the social actors directly involved, the representatives of various organizations who have participated in this struggle at different stages and leaders of the established political parties in order to get primary data. As part of my field work I interviewed 45 informants related to AGMS and another 40 informants concerned to Plachimada who belong to various categories. The primary data collection techniques entail unstructured and semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and observations. Likewise, the secondary sources such as both published and unpublished articles, reports, biography, life stories and the documents, published in the vernacular language (Malayalam), such as leaflets, pamphlets, manifestos, press notes and public talks have also been used for this study.

### **Outline of the Study**

Following this introduction chapter, an extensive critical review of the various social movement theories and approaches formulated since 1960s has been presented in the second chapter. This chapter looks at the concept of social movement and critically examines major theories and approaches such as *collective behaviour*, *resource*

*mobilisation, political process and new social movement theories*. It argues that while various social movement theories help to illuminate different aspects of social movements, an exclusive reliance on movement framework will not yield much to theoretically engage with the themes – *marginality, development, the social and the political* and the question of *agency* – in the context of contemporary social movements in Kerala. Chapter 3 engages with the secondary studies on social movements in India. The period 1960s has been considered as a historical point of reference because several studies on social movements in India were published during this time. Chapter 4 presents an analysis of the conditions of adivasis in conjunction with ‘Kerala model of development’ and modernity. An attempt has been made to present a historical overview of the marginality of adivasis in Kerala since the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century. In chapter 5, a thorough examination of the origin, transition and the present state of affairs of the movement AGMS has been presented. The articulation of the themes such as adivasi land question, the culture and identity of adivasis, conflict over the control of natural resources, their community life and broadly the imaginations of development in the trajectory of these movements have been inquired by situating them against the larger historical as well as contemporary social and political practices in Kerala. In fact, these themes are entangled with the idea of marginality, development and agency constructed within/by the movements of AGMS. Chapter 6 is a descriptive mapping of the genesis and further expansion of the trajectory of the anti-Coca Cola movement in Plachimada. In pursuing it further, an analysis based on this descriptive account on Plachimada movement has been done in the chapter 7. Final chapter (chapter 8) presents the summary and conclusions of the study. This chapter outlines the continuity and shift in the

meanings of the themes marginality, development and agency of the adivasis in Kerala in reference to the discourses constructed within/by these social movements.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Mapping the Terrain of Social Movement Theories**

The gesture of social movements, are perceived as generic or all-encompassing in nature. However, the important task of a social movement study is to complicate this gesture, explain and make it more intelligible within the context of the present sociological studies of social movements. The appearance of diverse social movements and collective action from 1960s, particularly in the context of Europe and America has made a great effect in shaping the dominant theories of social movements. Similarly, the field of social movements generated a vibrant area of research in the postcolonial societies like India since 1980s. During the last three decades, the Indian society witnessed the emergence of a plethora of social movements in various domains of life with respect to diverse socio-political, economic and cultural issues and claims.

Given this context, any study on social movement within our socio-political and cultural specificities confronts a significant question: can theories, in the Euro-American context unfold the complexities of social movements and collective actions articulated in a postcolonial society like India. It requires a critical scrutiny of the dominant theoretical paradigms of social movements and that must be foregrounded in our distinct social, political and cultural conditions to engage with that question. Thus, this chapter attempts to present an overview of major social movement theories formulated after 1960s and critically evaluate these theories by keeping the project: thinking through marginality, development and agency of the adivasis, in mind.

I take 1960s as the benchmark to begin this critical overview because it was a period that marked a paradigm shift in the history of social movement theories. Much has been written and discussed about the classical theoretical approaches to social movements and specifically their negative orientation towards movements until the 1950s. This negativity was theoretically grounded within the framework of social psychology and the preoccupation with the assumptions on “irrational origins and nature of movements” (Buechler 2000, 20). Therefore, we do not find any immediate significance in the reproduction of the discussion around classical notions on social movements here again. While one does not deny the contribution of social movement theories to illuminate different aspects of social movements, in this chapter, I argue that reliance on movement framework alone will not yield much to theoretically engage with the themes – *marginality*, *development*, the *social* and the *political* and finally, the question of *agency* – in the context of contemporary social movements in Kerala. This argument is in fact elaborated in chapters 3, 5 and 7.

The present chapter is in six sections. The first section looks at the concept of social movements and the way several scholars attempted to define it. In the following sections, I summarise the major assumptions of dominant social movement theories in the 1960s to the present which are: *collective behavior theory* (section two), *resource mobilisation approach* (section three), *political process theory* (section four), then *new social movement theories* (section five) and an attempt is made to critically engage with it. Final section sums up the major limitations and critique towards social movement theory approach.

## **Theoretical Approaches to Social Movements from 1960s to the Present**

An overview of the studies on social movements informs us the following as the major theoretical perspectives during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s: 1) Collective Behaviour Theory; 2) Resource Mobilisation Framework; 3) Political Process theory; and 4) New Social Movement theories. Here, a broader meaning of the concept of social movement is provided. Several authors (Neidhardt and Rucht 1991; Eder 1993; Meyer and Tarrow 1998; Touraine 1985 and Buechler 2000), consider social movement as a modern phenomenon. According to Buechler, the macro socio-economic and political processes such as modernization, capitalism and state building in the European society “gave rise to the social movement as a distinctively modern form of collective action” (2000, 5). The European scholars like Neidhardt and Rucht pointed out that “the idea of conscious collective action having the capacity to change society as a whole came only with the era of enlightenment (1991, 449). Likewise, Eder also argues that “social movements are genuinely modern phenomena. Only in modern society have social movements played a constitutive role in social development” (1993, 108).

As part of this modern identification, the concept of social movement has been defined in various ways in the domain of different theoretical approaches. In this context, what Mario Diani asks is a crucial question – what does social movement specifically refer to? It is very difficult to offer a commonly accepted universal definition for social movement by incorporating all the common and distinct features of the multi variant manifestations of social movement. Hence, in the context of looking at the prominent paradigms of social movement since 1960s Mario Diani had identified three basic

components of social movements which are: ‘networks of relations between a plurality of actors’; ‘collective identity’; and ‘conflictual issues.’ In line with this identification, he defines: “social movements as consisting in networks of informal interaction between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political and/or cultural conflict on the basis of a shared collective identity” (2000, 156). Following Charles Tilly (1986), Sidney Tarrow provides a more suitable and convincing explanation for social movement. In his view, it is not correct to attribute the expression such as extremism, violence, and deprivation on social movements. Instead, he writes, “They are better defined as *collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities* (2011, 9, emphasis in original).

Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani (1999) observed that until the beginning of 1970s, two prominent theoretical models dominated the analysis of social movements, that is, ‘Marxist’ and ‘structural functionalist’ approaches. However, these theories confronted serious theoretical challenges and had its own limitations in explaining the emergence of social movements and collective actions during the 1960s and 1970s. As a result, “the perspectives like collective behaviour, resource mobilisation and political process had made serious critique against structural-functionalist model and developed to address the theoretical lacunae in America.” Similarly, in Europe, “new social movement perspectives performed serious critique towards Marxist approach to the structural base of conflict” (2). Now let me turn to look at each of these theoretical approaches separately and more carefully.



## Collective Behaviour Theory

The purpose of this section is not to make an attempt to look at the classical approaches to collective behavior theory which begins from Robert Park's works and the inauguration of Chicago School of collective behavior studies. The discussion on the classical behavioural approaches to collective action and social movements had agreed up on the fact that they viewed collective action/social movements as irrational outbursts and pathological symptom of the society. It exemplifies the observation of two of the prominent advocates of collective behaviour theory – Robert Park and Ernest Burgess – of collective behavior theory. In their influential work, *Introduction to the Science of Sociology* written jointly by the authors argues:

Social unrest may be, therefore, a symptom of health. It is only when the process of disorganization goes on so rapidly and such an extent that the whole existing social structure is impaired, and society is, for that reason, not able to readjust itself, that unrest is to be regarded as a pathological symptom (1921, 926).

Some of the important works that can be located in this theoretical tradition include Herbert Blumer (1957), Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian (1972), and Kurt and Gladys Lang (1961). Therefore, the focus of this section will be confined to the later version of the collective behaviour approach which dominated in the 1960s and 1970s.

One of the main variants of the collective behaviour approach dominated in the 1960s was Smelser's Theory of Collective Behaviour. Neil Smelser is an American sociologist who had published his influential book in the area of collective behaviour in early 1960s titled as *Theory of Collective Behavior* (1962). The central aim of this book was to construct a comprehensive theory with regard to the various articulations of collective

behaviour which includes panics; craze (which encompasses the fashion cycle, the fad, the financial boom, the bandwagon, and the religious revival); revolutions; lynching; social and political movements, crowds, and race riots. Smelser considerably differs from earlier approaches of collective behavior and defines it “as the *mobilization on the basis of a belief which redefines social action*” (1962, 8, emphasis in original). Later, he substantiated these defining characteristic features, which is, ‘redefinition’ and ‘social action.’ In addition to this, he added more qualifying characteristic features to collective behaviour such as “various kinds of beliefs...” which he named as *generalized beliefs*. The third defining characteristic feature is “similar to Blumer’s contrast between collective and culturally prescribed behaviour” (8). According to him, there are certain basic components of social action which are: “(a) values, or general sources of legitimacy; (b) norms, or regulatory standards for interaction; (c) mobilization of individual motivation for organized action in roles and collectivities; (d) situational facilities, or information, skills, tools, and obstacles in the pursuit of concrete goals” (9).

Smelser believed that there are some “determinants” or “necessary conditions” that must be present in order for collective behaviours to happen. Hence, he introduced six determinants of collective behavior which are: 1) structural conduciveness; 2) structural strain; 3) growth and spread of a generalized belief 4) precipitating factors; 5) mobilization of participants for action and 6) the operation of social control (Ibid, 15-17). Theorists have perceived this “value-added” model of collective behaviour as analytically useful and also informed many empirical studies during 1970s and 80s. Nonetheless, sociologists and social movement theorists also suggested serious critiques against Smelser’s theory of collective behavior. It is worth mentioning some of the

critiques here. Staggenborg (2011), referred some of the criticisms raised against Smelser's theory and reiterated that "Smelser's theory, along with other breakdown theories, has been criticized for relying too heavily on structural strains to explain social movements" (15). Agreeing with the arguments of Useems (1975) and Wilson (1973), Staggenborg pointed out that "no clear criteria exists for identifying 'strain' in a society; once a social movement or other forms of collective behavior occurs, it is always possible to find some type of strain, making the argument tautological" and he added that "the theory seems to assume that societies are normally stable and that strains, and the social movement that accompany them, are unusual" (Ibid).

Alan Scott (1990) critically examines the works of Smelser by equating him as a leading advocate of functionalism and compares him with the works of Manual Castells preoccupied in the framework of neo-Marxism. He rightly pointed out that both functionalism and neo-Marxism are "the major rival paradigms which dominated sociology from the 1950s to 1980s" (37). Then he attempts to make a severe criticism against functionalism and neo-Marxism. On the one hand, he argues that functionalism manifests its inability to comprehend the complexities of social movements when it tried to equate social movements with irrational outbursts. He substantiated this argument by commenting on the inappropriateness of Smelser's "conception of scientific method to the social sciences" in general and social movements in particular. He says that Smelser's "analysis which did succeed in producing general laws from basic proposition, or 'conditions of conduciveness', would be profoundly ahistorical and decontextual" (Ibid, 43). Then he added that Smelser's "marginalizing of social movements has its origin not merely in his method, but also in the values implicit in the

analysis. His attitude towards social movements is one of thinly disguised hostility” (44).

According to Buechler (2000), Smeleser’s theory of collective behavior was theoretically rooted in Talcott Parson’s “elaborate conceptual scheme of society as a social system” (25). The intellectual history of sociology registered the common fact that, in terms of theoretical orientation and assumptions, the larger theoretical paradigms such as symbolic interactionism and structural-functionalism are situated as totally different entities. However, Buechler identifies “some remarkable parallels and similarities in their conception of collective behavior”. Thus, he argues that “despite very different theoretical ancestry, both theories partially converge on a view of collective behavior as non-institutional, spontaneous, short-lived expressions of behavior that rests on a shared beliefs and ranges from panic to revolution” (Ibid, 26). Therefore, a major limitation of Smeleser’s view on collective behaviour is the attempt to construct a “unitary concept of collective behavior, which places movements on the same analytical plane as panics and crazes and seeks to explain them through the same structural-functional theory of collective behaviour” (Ibid, 27).

Similarly, McAdam (1982) offers intense critiques towards the paradigm of collective behavior. According to him, one of the major assumptions of collective behavior approach, that considers social movements as a reaction or response to social strain, is a highly problematic one. In fact, it fails to consider the larger political context in which movements emerge and it presupposes a mechanistic and linear relationship between macro level strain and micro level behaviour. He critiques by drawing attention to the

individualistic emphasis, in other words, a prominence of looking at collective action as merely a psychological phenomenon in collective behaviour approach. Due to this emphasis, he argues, this approach totally repudiates the political dimension of collective behaviour. To conclude, in the backdrop of the above discussions one could argue that collective behavior theory does not have much significance in understanding and conceptualising the contemporary social movements, particularly in the postcolonial societies like India.

### **Resource Mobilisation Theory**

An inquiry into the historical origin of the *resource mobilization* theory unravels the fact that the social movements emerged in the 1960s, particularly in the United States significantly challenged the theoretical assumptions of the earlier approaches such as collective behavior, relative deprivation and mass society. Many social movement scholars discerned the fact that resource mobilization theory was a theoretical response to the manifold protests organized under the leadership of civil rights movements in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s. Consequently, the first expressions of resource mobilisation theory were formulated by McCarthy and Zald (1973, 1977) which was largely situated from the empirical experiences of America. Resource mobilization theory can be broadly divided into two groups. As I mentioned above, the first group represents McCarthy and Zald as the inventors of this theory and they give emphasis on entrepreneurial model of the theory. On the other hand, Tilly (1978) and McAdam (1982) offer a political dimension of the theory (Buechler, 2000, 35). McCarthy and Zald claim that this approach as a clear departure from the earlier

tradition of social movement analysis. Now, let me summarise the major assumptions and theoretical propositions of the resource mobilization theory (including both versions) before I move on to a critical appraisal of this approach.

According to McCarthy and Zald (1977), one of the chief concerns of the formulation of this theory was to clearly depart from a social psychological view of social movements and collective actions. Thus, this theory gives emphasis on how activists themselves perceived social movement and what is required in developing and succeeding as a social movement activity. In that context, the following aspects such as “problems of mobilization, the manufacture of discontent, tactical choices, and the infrastructure of society and movements necessary for success” (1212) are vital to understand a movement which was largely absent in the earlier approaches. In this fashion, it seems very important to look at the “...dynamics and tactics of social movement growth, decline and change” (Ibid, 1213). For McCarthy and Zald, the central thrust of their theory can be outlined in the following observation. They point out:

The resource mobilization approach emphasizes both societal support and constraint of social movement phenomena. It examines the variety of resources that must be mobilized, the linkages of social movements to other groups, the dependence of movements upon external support for success, and the tactics used by authorities to control or incorporate movements (1977, 1213).

Later, Edwards and McCarthy (2004) have suggested a typology of resources that encompasses five types of resources which are: 1) Material (money and physical capital); 2) Moral (solidarity, support for the movement’s goals); 3) Social-Organizational (organizational strategies, social network and bloc recruitment); 4)

Human (volunteers, staff and leaders) and 5) Cultural (prior activist experience, understanding of the issues and collective action knowhow). Hence, McCarthy and Zald claim that their new approach “depends more upon political sociology and economic theories than upon the social psychology of collective behavior” (1977, 1213). As part of this theoretical endeavour, they developed three central concepts which are: *social movement sector* (SMS), *social movement industries* (SMI) and *social movement organizations* (SMO). Let us briefly look at the meaning of each of these terms below.

According to them, a *social movement organization* (SMO) “is a complex, or formal, organization which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or a countermovement and attempts to implement those goals”. Whereas, *social movement industry* (SMI) has been constituted by “all SMOs that have as their goal the attainment of the broadest preferences of a social movement” (Ibid, 1218-19). Finally, the *social movement sector* (SMS) “consists of all SMIs in a society no matter to which SM they are attached” (1220). In the light of these descriptions, it is worth noting how they have defined the concept of social movement. According to them,

Social movement is a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society. A *countermovement* is a set of opinions and beliefs in a population opposed to a social movement. As is clear, we view social movement as nothing more than preference structures directed toward social change, very similar to what political sociologists would term issue cleavages (1977, 1217-1218).

Furthermore, other major exponents of resource mobilization theory are Oberschall (1973); Gamson (1975); Charles Tilly (1978) and Jenkins (1981; 1983). By following these authors, Jenkins (1981) encapsulated the main theses of resource mobilisation theory as:

Movement actions are rational, adaptive responses to the costs and rewards of different lines of action;

The basic goals of movements are defined by conflicts of interest built institutionalized power relations;

The grievances generated by such conflicts are sufficiently ubiquitous that the formation and mobilization of movements depend changes in resources, group organization, and opportunities for collective action;

Centralized, formally structured movement organizations are more typical of modern social movements and more effective at mobilizing resources and mounting sustained challenges than decentralized, informal movement structures;

The success of movements is largely determined by strategic factors and the political processes in which they become enmeshed (Ibid, 528).

Now let us turn to look at another version of resource mobilization theory. The approach primarily proposed by Charles Tilly (1978) and later expanded by McAdam (1982) has been considered as another version of resource mobilization theory by some scholars. But in my view, it is problematic to consider the theoretical approach of both Charles Tilly and McAdam, that is, political process theory as merely another version of resource mobilization. Charles Tilly, an American sociologist and historian, broadly shared many of the major assumptions of resource mobilization theory propounded McCarthy and Zald, but at the same time, he recognizes lacunae and made an attempt to go beyond in his famous work, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (1988), originally published in 1978. Thus, Buechler (2000, 36), one of the strong advocates of the approach of both Tilly and McAdam had observed that “if economic relationships provide the guiding metaphor for the entrepreneurial version of the theory, power struggles are the guiding metaphor of the political version of the theory”. Consequently, one could see that along with the economic aspects of mobilization, Tilly made an attempt to synthesize the insights of both historians and political sociologists in the



analysis of social movements. Thus, by disagreeing with Buechler, I consider Charles Tilly provided the expanded base for a new theoretical approach known as *political process*.

Given this, let us examine the problems and limitations of this theoretical approach known as resource mobilization. Although Jenkins largely follows resource mobilization perspective, he differs with McCarthy and Zald in certain crucial respects. He argues that “a multi-factored approach is more useful than their exclusive emphasis on organizational resources” (1983, 532). Another major critique against this approach is that it totally overlooks the “structural sources of conflict and the specific stakes for the control of which social actors mobilize” (Melucci 1982; Piven and Cloward 1992 Cited in della Porta and Diani, 1999, 9). In fact, this critique is truly relevant in the case of McCarthy and Zald’s resource mobilisation perspective whereas, it is partially wrong in the case of latter described approach of resource mobilisation since we could see that they (mainly Tilly and McAdam) made some efforts to look at the structural aspects of collective action. Let us look at some of the sharp criticism put forward by the authors J L Cohen and Steven M Buechler against resource mobilisation theory.

J L Cohen (1985) raised an important critique against resource mobilisation theory from the vantage point of identity and modern civil society. In this article, she made an attempt to compare two theoretical paradigms: *resource mobilization* and *identity-oriented paradigm*, as two dominant theoretical paradigms during the 1970s and 1980s in the study of social movements. She summarized the major assumptions of these paradigms and explained how these paradigms are different from the traditional

theoretical approach to social movements. The comparison mainly revolved around one aspect - what is 'new' in new social movements. In addition to this, she also enquires about "how they could inform each other" while maintaining the difference. It is clearly evident that the main focus of these paradigms is focus different. However, Cohen tries to show a similarity in these two approaches that both had relied on "key features of modern civil society" to look at "what is specific to modern social movements" by locating contemporary social movements in the terrain of modern civil society (664). In order to critically examine resource mobilization paradigm, she mainly focuses on Charles Tilly's works on social movements. Similarly, in connection with *Identity* paradigm, Alain Touraine's contributions in the field of contemporary social movement studies have been discussed at length in the article. Here, I mainly focus on her critique of resource mobilization paradigm.

Disappointed with resource mobilisation paradigm and by locating contemporary social movements in the terrain of civil society, she writes: "the resource-mobilization approach, which resolutely pursues the objectifying logic of empirical-analytical social sciences, is interested primarily in aggregate data and not in questions of identity" (Ibid, 665). While talking about Charles Tilly's position on the emergence of social movements, Cohen writes: "despite his explicit polemic against the Smelserian and Durkheimian versions of the 'breakdown' model of collective behavior, Tilly retains the thesis that large-scale structural change ('modernization') affects collective action..." (678). Further, what is new in Tilly's version of modernization theory "is the linkage between a specific action repertoire and structural changes in the everyday life of the relevant actors..." (679). At the same time, she points out an important limitation of his

structural analysis. Cohen observes that “his analysis of structural change does not challenge the fact of differentiation in the transition from ‘community’ to ‘society’.” Alternatively, Cohen puts it, “Tilly shows how economic transformation, urbanization, and state-making produce a long-run shift in the character and personnel of collective action. These processes (along with the development of the mass media) facilitate the emergence of new types of mobilizations and organizations while undermining others” (Ibid).

Even though Cohen admits and acknowledges the significance of Tilly’s conceptualization of social movements, she calls attention to the “strategic-instrumental bias” embedded in Tilly’s approach. According to her, as a result of this “strategic-instrumental bias,” his approach treats new meanings, new organizations, new identities, and of a social space for these which appear in civil society “as fate accomplish and to focus on the manifest level of movement activity, namely, mobilization.” (683). Therefore, the potentiality of his social movement analysis created through “historical investigations are considerably narrowed”. In short, Cohen argues, “social conflicts in and over civil society and the form of the political public sphere are viewed from only one side - as defensive or offensive reactions to change” (Ibid). Further, she reminds us that the conception of rationality, rational choice and rational action articulated in the resource mobilisation paradigm is too narrow. Hence, they failed to deeply challenge the concept of rationality employed by collective behaviourists and pluralists. Instead, they reproduced the concept by way of “means-ends rationality” and applied it in the analysis of social movements. Thus, she further asks, “hasn’t the critique of collective-behaviour tradition thrown out the baby with the

bathwater by excluding the analysis of values, norms, ideologies, projects, culture, and identity in other than instrumental terms” (688).

Indeed, to Cohen, contemporary social movements, often combines both the features like defensive and reactive. For Tilly, these are the two main types of collective actions that “do not protect preexisting communities from outside incursions. Rather, they defend spaces for the creation of new identities and solidarities” (689). By way of conclusion, Cohen suggests some ways to look at contemporary social movements and proposes to the theorists about the significance of exploring primarily the construction of new identity formation through collective action and significance of power in that struggle. Similarly, it is also highly desirable to study the “creation of democratic spaces for autonomous social action” through collective action and how it reinterprets “norms and reshape institutions” (Ibid). In addition to this, the assessment of the “relations between adversaries and the stakes of their conflicts” and also the “analysis of the structural and cultural developments that contribute to such heightened reflexivity” (690) is salient in the conceptualization of contemporary social movements.

In an interesting piece of work, Buechler (1993) challenges the utility of resource mobilization framework by exploring two hundred years (basically 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries) of history of women’s organizations in the United States. He argued that the long history of women’s mobilisations/movements offered an “analytically interesting and empirically rich context for identifying and evaluating problematic issues for RM theory” (219). In the wake of this research, Buechler presented ten issues against resource mobilisation framework which are outlined below.

The first issue he discusses is regarding *grievances*. A major assumption of resource mobilisation framework is that grievances may be a necessary condition but not a sufficient condition in explaining the origin of social movements. Instead, they give emphasis on actual and potential resources and argued that the control over these resources is crucial to ascertain the occurrence and further the success or failure of a social movement. By referring to the work of Tilly (1978), Buechler actually recognizes that his strand of resource mobilisation framework is “somewhat more attentive to the issue of grievances” but they also failed to “rank them on a par with resources in accounting for collective action and social protest.” In this context, citing some empirical and historical examples from the history of women’s movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well as contemporary movements, Buechler questioned the validity of the above assumption applying in an oblivious fashion without recognizing the distinction of each movement. Thus, he argues that “in some cases, grievances can at least be as important as access to resources in explaining the emergence of social movements” (221). Then, he concludes that “the social construction of grievances may be the critical step which allows the members of socially dispersed groups to begin to mobilize for action” (222).

The second issue, Buechler recognises with resource mobilisation approach is concerned with *ideology*. According to him:

Ideology encompasses the ideas, beliefs, values, symbols and meanings that motivate individual participation and give coherence to collective action. Ideological beliefs typically provide a critical diagnosis of the larger society, an idealized sketch of a positive alternative, and some suggestion as to how the problematic present may be replaced with a preferable future (Ibid).

Through this articulation, he tried to critically examine the relative marginalization of ideological issues within the framework of resource mobilisation. Thus, he argues, that at least in some cases, ideology plays a crucial role in movement mobilisation. Consequently, often ideology is a key factor “in politicizing discontent, fostering collective identity, and defining movement resources” (Ibid). The next critique Buechler posed is against the relative exclusion of both macro-level and micro-level explorations of collective action in resource mobilisation paradigm. He concisely observed that resource mobilisation paradigm exclusively focuses on meso-level organizational analysis. Because of this, the larger questions such as “social structure and historical change” and the smaller issues such as “individual motivation and social interaction” had received insufficient attention within the domain of resource mobilisation. While examining feminist activism, Buechler finds out larger structures such as “capitalist industrialization, state consolidation, demographic changes, alterations in family structures, labor force participation and educational attainment” (224), had played a vital role in the origin and further historical shaping of the activism (Ibid). Although admitting and appreciating the strength of meso-level analysis in resource mobilisation framework, Buechler invites attention to the complex nature of macro- and micro-levels of society which is still considered as an exasperated issue in sociological theory. In this context, no theory on social movement can move ahead without attending to the questions concerned to macro and micro-level interrelationships with collective action.

Later, he takes the interpretation of “micro-level” as a separate issue for further analysis. As far as social movement analysis is concerned, one of the main micro-level processes constitutes the act of participation in social movement activity. Earlier

theories reduced the act of participation merely as an indication of irrationality. Resource mobilisation paradigm came up with severe critique of this reductionist view regarding participation and suggested that participation must be understood on the basis of “cost-benefit calculus”. But later this view was also debated and problematised within discourses of resource mobilisation. Some of the variants within this framework suggested that as Buechler writes, “the factors like solidarity, group interests, loyalty, responsibility or urgency may be more fundamental in motivating individual participation than any utilitarian calculation of costs and benefits” (225). Some other critiques pointed out that on the one hand, it will become “tautological” if it interprets on utilitarian grounds and on the other, it will become broadly and demonstrably false if it interprets narrowly. Hence, one could see that there are many attempts (Ferree and Miller 1985; Snow and Benford 1988; Benford, 1993; Klandermans 1984, 1988; McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1988) made by these authors to critically scrutinize the inadequacy of resource mobilisation approach which helped to recognize the importance of a number of micro-level social and psychological processes in the movement mobilisation. Even if, as Buechler rightly reminds, the utilitarian “rational actor has not been displaced by this new attention to the micro-level” (226).

As discussed about the relative exclusion of macro-level processes in resource mobilisation theory, Buechler once again explores the theme under the title, “Theorizing the Macro-level”. In this context, he acutely problematises both versions of RM theory by observing that they both “take an eclectic and somewhat ad hoc approach to structural issues, and neither offers any systematic theory of how macro-level organization might affect movements (and vice versa) beyond resource availability or

opportunity structures” (226). As a result of this failure of RM framework to carefully look at the macro structures and historical contexts has considerably subverted the analytical capacity of the approach in order to study the complexity of contemporary social movements. Further, he argues that this inattentiveness towards the macro-structures is a serious issue in the present context since contemporary social theories – for instance, he mainly suggested three theories: Habermas’s analysis of modern society, recent scholarship in political economy, and the works on multiculturalism and social diversity – offer a variety of approaches to understand the macro-level processes and how it shapes and reshapes the society. If they fail to incorporate those insights of the recent theory, then he cautions that will reinforce “RM’s implicit image of social movement activism as involving reified, free-floating organizations detached from larger socio-historical contexts as they pursue their collective goals” (227).

Another notable issue raised by Buechler against RM approach is concerned with the rational actor model. According to him, it was rooted in exchange theory and was subjected for meticulous criticism in various sociological approaches. Recently, feminist scholars also problematised this model. By referring to the feminist scholars such as Nancy Hartsock (1985), Ferree (1992) the author argues that there is a huge ontological gap existing between RM theory’s rational actor model and radical feminist scholarship. Hence, he argues that this “theory cannot provide any definitive interpretation of this movement because the actors, goals, and actions which the theory presumes do not correspond to the actual actors, goals and actions of this sector” (227).



A further critique against RM approach has been put forward by Buechler who engaged with “collective identity”. The social movement actors assumed resources and ‘preference structures’ as the two essential factors which constitute a solidarity and further affinity among participants of the movement. The view has severe limitations, as Buechler pointed out, because it totally neglects initial requirement as a construction of social and collective identity in shaping a movement and vice versa. Besides, collective identity is an important theme in new social movement theories. The main advocates of new social movement approach like, Cohen (1985); Eder (1985), and Melucci (1985; 1988 and 1989) emphasised the prominence of collective identity in framing a movement. Hence, Buechler writes, they all “recognize that people who participate in collective action do so only when such action resonates with both an individual and a collective identity that makes such action meaningful” (228).

### **Political Process Theory**

*Political process* theory, which is also known as *political opportunity* theory, of social movements had emanated in the United States, partially as a critique of resource mobilization approach. Indeed, it had drawn theoretical insights from political sociology. Peter Eisinger, David S Meyer, Charles Tilly, Doug McAdam and Sydney Tarrow are considered as the most important social theorists who advocated this approach. Mainly, this approach was formulated in the late 1970s and early 1980s in the United States by American scholars. Joe Foweraker (1995) explained the historical and intellectual context in which *political process model* has emerged. He outlined the limitations of European literature on social movements (mainly new social movement

theories) on the one hand and North American literature on social movements on the other. According to him, European literature mainly focused on “the structural origins of social movements without analysing the political conditions which facilitated or hindered collective action. Politics was reduced to a residual category or to a transmission belt” (18). Interestingly, on the other side, the North American literature emphasised political questions however only in terms of “organisation and strategy” and thus they overlooked the idea of “analyzing either social context or political context in the form of the state” (Ibid). The term “political process” has been taken from an article written by Rule and Tilly titled as *Political Process in Revolutionary France, 1830-1832* (1975 Cited in McAdam, 1985, 36). In fact, Rule’s and Tilly’s notion on political process was not identical with the idea presented by McAdam in the same category. But it should be noted that the term “political process” carries the two key assumptions which are significant in the case of all versions of political process model. These two key assumptions are as follows: firstly, it conceives social movement primarily as a political phenomenon and institutionalized political process has a crucial role in shaping social movements. Secondly, a social movement refers to a constant process, “from generation to decline, rather than a discrete series of developmental stages” (Ibid).

In the subsequent development of this approach, they introduced three important concepts in the conceptualisation of social movements are: *political opportunity structures*, *mobilizing structures* and *framing processes*. In this, the key concept is *political opportunity structure*. However, the meaning of the term has been used in many different ways. The genesis of the concept, *political opportunity structure* can be

found in Eisinger (1973) at a very preliminary level and further, it mainly developed and elaborated by Charles Tilly (1978), Doug McAdam (1982) and Sydney Tarrow (1983). According to Meyer, political process theory “arose as a corrective, explicitly concerned with predicting variance in the periodicity, content, and outcomes of activist efforts over time across different institutional contexts”. Thus, the understanding and examination of the ‘context’, in which the movements have originated, has great significance in this theory. Subsequently, this approach, “emphasized the interaction of activist efforts and more mainstream institutional politics” (2004, 127). In the beginning, the key premise underlying this approach was that “protest outside mainstream political institutions was closely tied to more conventional political activity” (Ibid).

The central point in the political process approach was that “activists do not choose goals, strategies, and tactics in a vacuum,” instead, “the political context, conceptualized fairly broadly, sets the grievances around which activists mobilize, advantaging some claims and disadvantaging others” (Ibid, 127-128). This notion is very much connected to the idea of ‘structure’ and ‘agency’ in sociology and social theories. For Meyer, in the context of political process approach, *agency* refers to the “wisdom, creativity, and outcomes of activists’ choices” which can only be understood and evaluated by looking at the *political context* and “the rules of the games in which those choices are made that is, *structure*” (128). In this context, it should be noted that this notion on agency and structure is theoretically located in the liberal ideas of agency, in which, it appears that structure gets more privilege than agency. Thus, knowingly or unknowingly it reinforces the structure and agency dichotomy.

Eisinger (1973) made the initial efforts to explicitly use and define the “political opportunity” framework. In this essay, he explored the linkage between environmental conditions and the occurrence of political protest activities. He defines, *political environment*, “as a generic term used variously in the literature of political science to refer to, among other things, aspects of formal political structure, the climate of governmental responsiveness, social structure, and social stability” (11). He then discusses the implication of this ‘political environment,’ that is, the “context within which politics takes place” (Ibid). According to him, this context is broadly referred as *structure of political opportunities*. Then, he substantiated his idea on the concept of structure of political opportunities – that has been quoted below at some length. He writes:

That is to say, such factors as the nature of the chief executive, the mode of aldermanic election, the distribution of social skills and status, and the degree of social disintegration, taken individually or collectively, serve in various ways to obstruct or facilitate citizen activity in pursuit of political goals. Other environmental factors, such as the climate of governmental responsiveness and the level of community resources, help to establish the chances of success of citizen political activity. In short, elements in the environment impose certain constraints on political activity or open avenues for it. The manner in which individuals and groups in the political system behave, then, is not simply a function of the resources they command but of the openings, weak spots, barriers, and resources of the political system itself. There is, in this sense, interaction, or linkage, between the environment, understood in terms of the notion of a structure of political opportunities, and political behavior. (11–12).

Here, Eisinger tries to outline the meaning of the concept ‘political opportunity structure’. He proposed this concept as part of an attempt to understand why some American cities encountered large-scale riots due to racism and poverty during the late 1960s while others did not.<sup>16</sup> Meyer (2004, 128) interpreted that Eisinger “focused on

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<sup>16</sup> He had studied 43 American cities out of 141 through a random sampling.

the openness of urban governments to more conventional political inputs and found that cities with a combination of what he termed ‘open’ and ‘closed’ structures for citizen participation were most likely to experience riots”. Consequently, he added that “cities with extensive institutional openings preempted riots by inviting conventional means of political participation to redress grievances; cities without visible openings for participation repressed or discouraged dissident claimants to foreclose eruptions of protest”. In this context, this “approach implicitly assumed constant pressures across urban America and treated the most proximate institutional arrangements as the key factors influencing the way political dissent emerged” (128).

Now let me turn to look at how Charles Tilly, another main exponent of the political process theory, conceived and persuaded the idea of political opportunity structure and collective action. Charles Tilly (1978) critically examined the works of Paul Wilkinson (1971), Joseph Gusfield (1966) and Roberta Ash (1972) and found that all of them theoretically relied heavily on Weber in general and his notion on collective action in particular. For Weber, Tilly writes, collective action means “a group of people somehow orient themselves to the same belief system and act together to promote change on the basis of the common orientation” (40). Further, as part of this analysis he situates collective action in its specific historical circumstances and talking about the larger structural changes such as state making, the expansion of capitalism and industrialization, and so on and so forth. Thus, according to Tilly, Weberian tradition provided significant theoretical insights for case studies. However, it was not useful for further theorization. Then, he critiqued Weber and observed that “Weber left almost untouched the analysis of the genesis and mobilization of charismatic movements” (42).

Thus, those who are interested to understand the origin and organization of the movement had gone beyond the framework of Weber. But at the same time, he acknowledges the importance of Weber because, according to him, both “Weber and the Weberians have pursued several problems in collective action more persistently and effectively than have the followers of Durkheim and Mill” (42).

Charles Tilly broadly followed a pro-Marxist approach in his study. In order to develop a pro-Marxist framework, he carefully examined the studies based on European society and the collective actions emerged in the writings on the French society in particular. Some of the important works he referred are: Barrington Moore’s *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (1966); Eric Wolf’s *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century* (1969); Georges Lefebvre’s writings on *French Revolution*; and Richard Cobb’s (1961; 1964 and 1970) writings. In the light of these readings, he observed that “the Marxist approach to the study of French political conflicts gained new strength” and subsequently he pointed out two reasons for it. The first one is, “Marxists were more inclined than others to take up a close study of the ‘little people’ which this sort of collective history involved”, and other one, “the Marxist tradition provided more powerful means of analyzing major divisions within the population than its rivals did” (1978, 47). Further, he also looked at the experiences of England as a country outside of France. In this regard, he was keen on the implications of “collective history” on collective action in England. Accordingly, he referred the important works of Lewis Namier (1962); Hobsbawm and Rude’s *Captain Swing* (1969); E. P. Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working class* (1963) and John Foster’s *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution* (1974) to understand the English society. As part of this inquiry,

he found that Marxian treatment of collective action was theoretically more rich and useful when compared to the framework of Durkheim, Mill, and Weber. For him, Marxian approach focused on the “ubiquity of conflict, the importance of interests rooted in the organization or production, the influence of specific forms of organization on the character and intensity of collective action” (48). But, at the same time, he recognised one of the important limitations of Marxian approach in comparison with Weberian analysis. He writes, “Marxists have not paid as much attention as Weberians have to the implications of prevalent belief systems, or to the processes by which movements rise and fall” (Ibid). Given this counter reading insights, Tilly summarised his analytical framework as: “doggedly anti-Durkheimian, resolutely pro-Marxian, but sometimes indulgent to Weber and sometimes reliant on Mill” (Ibid, 1978).

Conceived in this way, Tilly defines collective action as, “joint action in pursuit of common ends.” Further, Tilly identifies certain components which are significant in the analysis of collective action. For him, “interest, organization, mobilization, opportunity and collective action itself” (Ibid, 7) are the big components which must be addressed in the analysis of collective action. Thus, he argued:

...a group's collective action is a function of (1) the extent of its shared *interests* (advantages and disadvantages likely to result from interactions with other groups), (2) the intensity of its *organization* (the extent of common identity and unifying structure among its members) and (3) its *mobilization* (the amount of resources under its collective control) (84, emphasis in original).

Subsequently, he tries to explain each of these components from the perspective of the people who are the main constituents of many of collection actions. According to Tilly, “with respect to *interests*” people “give priority to economic and political life. They favor a group's own articulation of its interest over the assumptions of contemporary

observers and over our own retrospective judgment as to what would have been best for the group". Then, in terms of *organization*, "they focus on relatively well-defined groups. They therefore neglect two fascinating sorts of questions: how new groups oriented to new world-views come into being, and under what conditions ill-defined sets of people, such as passers-by or friendship networks, become important collective actors" (1988, 8). As far as *mobilization* is concerned, "they stress the factors of production – land, labor, capital, technology – and neglect the possibility that attitudes are more important resources for collective action than any of these" (Ibid). In the case of *opportunity*, Tilly considers "political opportunity, coalition, repression, and relations among governments and well-defined contenders for power over those governments" and finally, when he considers *collective action* he gives priority to "most of the concrete discussion deals with contentious gatherings: publicly visible assemblies in which conflicting interests are clearly in play" (Ibid).

Based on these descriptions, one could draw a conclusion that even though Tilly's theoretical approach on *political process* broadly depends upon some economic categories and logic, the impetus of the approach is foregrounded on politics, power and opportunity structure in relation to tactics, strategies and instrumental power struggle among competing groups. Hence, in this context, it is worth remembering the components he added later such as 'power,' 'repression,' and 'opportunity/threat' as the determinants of group's collective action.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> In the earlier sections of this book, Tilly (1978) made some efforts to define each one of these terms. Let me recount these definitions here again. According to him, **power** "refers to the extent to which the outcomes of the population's interactions with other populations favor its interests over those of the others;



Doug McAdam, an American sociologist is another most important proponent of political process model in social movement studies. He was widely credited with the achievement of synthesizing various versions of the political process approaches into a fully developed “political process model” of social movement studies by examining the history and development of the American Civil Rights movement in his widely acclaimed book, *Political Process and the Development of Black insurgency, 1930-1970* (1982). According to him, the structure of political opportunity is constituted by three factors: improvement in political opportunity; indigenous organizational strength; and cognitive liberation. Hence, he argues that interaction of these factors is very significant in understanding the emergence and development of social movements in the modern context. McAdam strongly believed that “movements develop in response to an ongoing process of interaction between movement groups and the larger socio-political environment they seek to change” (1985, 40). According to him, the political process model recognises three important factors that are conceived to be very essential in the emergence of “social insurgency”. In his view, the first one is the extent or degree of

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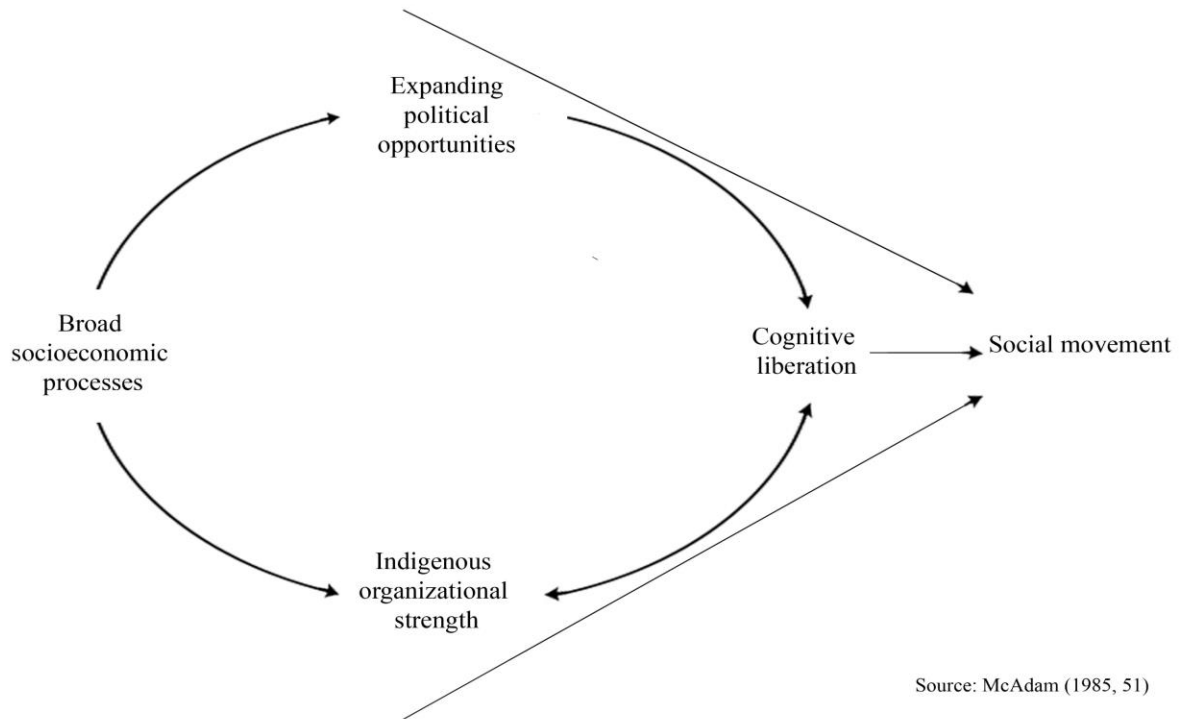
acquisition of power is an increase in the favorability of such outcomes, loss of power a decline in their favorability; *political* power refers to the outcomes of interactions with governments”.

Likewise, **repression** is “the costs of collective action to the contender resulting from interaction with other groups; as a process, any action by another group which raises the contender's cost of collective action; an action which lowers the contender's cost is a form of *facilitation*; let us reserve the terms *political* repression and *political* facilitation for the relationship between contender(s) and government(s)”.

And finally, he interprets **opportunity/threat** as “the extent to which other groups, including governments, are either (a) vulnerable to new claims which would, if successful, enhance the contender's realization of its interests or (b) threatening to make claims which would, if successful, reduce the contender's realization of its interests” (p. 55, I have bolded the key concepts in this text).

“organization within the aggrieved population;” the second, is imagined as “the collective assessment of the prospects for successful insurgency within that same population;” and finally, “the political alignment of groups within the larger political environment.” Then, he puts each of these factors in a more conceptual language and writes, “the first can be conceived of as the degree of organizational "readiness" within the minority community; the second, as the level of "insurgent consciousness" within the movement's mass base;” and the third, by following Eisinger (1973, 11) he writes, the ‘structure of political opportunities’ available to insurgent groups” (1985, 40). Through this conceptualization of the emergence of social insurgency, McAdam makes a clear departure from the classical approaches since they visualized insurgency as a preceding situation and initial condition for movement emergence. But, on the contrary, political process perspective, he perceives that “social insurgency is shaped by broad social processes that usually operate over a long period of time” (Ibid, 41). In this context, it is worth illustrating the diagrammatic representation of the emergence of social movement visualized in the political process model.

**Figure 2.1: A Political Process Model of Movement Emergence**



There are important limitations which I would discuss after Sydney Tarrow's contribution to this model. Sydney Tarrow, an American political scientist and sociologist remarkably contributed to the theory of political process. Since 1980s, he paid a great deal of attention to the study of social movements and contentious politics. In *Power in Movement*, one of his seminal contributions to the study of contentious politics, he proposed the following argument on the emergence and further evolution of the social movement. He argues:

Contentious politics is triggered when changing political opportunities and constraints create incentives for social actors who lack resources on their own. They contend through known repertoires of contention and expand them by creating innovations at their margins. When backed by dense social networks and galvanized by culturally resonant, action-oriented symbols, contentious

politics leads to sustained interaction with opponents. The result is the social movement (2006, 2).

In this book, he explicitly acknowledges his debt to Charles Tilly's work, *From Mobilization to Revolution* which we have already discussed. Subsequently, he attempted to offer a broad theoretical framework to understand the place of social movements, cycles of contention, and revolutions under the more general category of "contentious politics". According to Tarrow, political process-opportunities approach attempted to answer the questions such as, "why does contentious politics seem to develop only in particular periods of history and why does it sometimes produce robust social movements and sometimes flicker out into sectarianism or repression? And why do movements take different forms in different political environments?" (19). These questions as well as the answers to it clearly show that this approach emphasizes emergence and evolution of movements in connection with existing formal and informal institutional structures. In order to explain this, he uses the category "political opportunity structure". It has been constituted by two properties which are political opportunities and constraints or threats. For him, political opportunities refer to "consistent – but not necessarily formal, permanent or national – sets of clues that encourage people to engage in contentious politics." Similarly, political constraints or threats mean the factors such as "repression, but also like authorities' capacity to present a solid front to insurgents that discourage contention" (19-20). Thus, in his view, political opportunity structure cannot be perceived as an unchanged model essentially creating social movements. Instead, he looked at it as a set of signals which may guide us to anticipate the emergence of a contentious politics, "setting in motion a chain of causation that may ultimately lead to sustained interaction with authorities and

thence to social movements” (20). Here, Tarrow follows a structural approach where he strongly believes that it is important to explore “how underlying social structure and mobilization potential are transformed into action” in order to explain and answer the questions presented above (72). In such a transformative context, he thinks, the role of political opportunities and constraints are very essential. The other aspects which are relevant in the case of contentious politics and social movements are: repertoire of contention, consensus mobilization and identity, mobilizing structures and the dynamics of movement (20-23).

In his view, collective action is not an abstract category and he located it in the context of history and politics. However, he makes a clear distinction between contentious politics and collective action from other sorts of intervention such as market relations, lobbying, and representative politics since he believes that the former “brings ordinary people into confrontation with opponents, elites, or authorities.” It refers that “the particular historical, cultural, and power conditions of their society in part determine and in part are determined by contentious politics” (2011, 8).

When compared with other social movement theories discussed in the previous sections such as collective behaviour and resource theories, – it should be noted that this model (political process) gives more attention to how macro level changes transform political opportunity structures for social movements. However, it is also worth pointing out that this approach on macro political structures are not conceptually and theoretically engaging with any new conceptualizations in the domain of new political economy, political sociology and social science in general. Hence, Buechler succinctly put

forward this critique that “systemic power relations and structural inequality thus tend to be ignored by this approach” (39). I argue that no theory on social movement can conceptualise the movements persuasively if they are not attending to the questions concerned at macro and micro-level interrelationship with social movements. Thus, one could see contribution at one level in linking the micro with macro but at the same time it has its own limitations. The relationship between social movements and the state has great significance. It must be recognised that modern nation state as well as regional state plays a decisive role in framing the claims and demands of social movements. The class nature and broadly the ideology of the state plays a crucial role in the distribution of resources and power. The idea and the practice of ‘development’ and the ways in which this has been connected to the state is not a subject matter of the political process approach. New conceptualization of state, new forms of primitive accumulation, the idea like ‘accumulation by dispossession’, the establishment and functioning of postcolonial capitalism and the concepts like ‘political and civil society’ in the non-Western societies entail great conceptual and theoretical potentialities to academically engage with contemporary social movements. But, surprisingly all these theoretical developments in the theoretical domain of sociology as well as social science is not reflected in the political process model discussed above. Another significant area in the studies of contemporary social movements is the domain of culture and the politics of identity and recognition. Many of the social movement claims are political as well as cultural and broadly deal with politics of culture/culture of politics. In this backdrop, one could easily observe that the question of culture, identity and recognition are completely overlooked by the political process model. I prefer the term political context

rather than ‘political opportunity structure’ in this study. I am using it in the way Jackie Smith and Tina Fetner defined it. According to them, political context, “refers to the ways formal political institutions and more informal alignments of relevant actors’ condition the prospects for relatively powerless groups to effectively challenge the existing order” (2010, 16). Further it is worth noting about components of political context suggested by several authors. For them, structure of the polity, measures of democratization, state policies, and state bureaucracies and repressive capacities are the major components of political context. Even though this idea of political context has great explanatory value for social movement studies, this is also not free from the critique I raised above, that is while looking at political context it also fails to notice the other domains such as social and cultural in shaping the movements. Therefore, I expand the term political context by drawing the post-foundational philosophical understanding of the terms, ‘politics’ and the ‘political’ which, I believe, shall help to overcome above discussed theoretical inadequacies.

### **New Social Movement Theories**

Buechler (2000) argues that new social movement theory is not a homogenous and coherent entity. There are multiple theories which can be grouped under the umbrella term *new social movement*. Thus, instead of using new social movement theory as a singular category I use the term by inscribing its plural form, *new social movement theories*. Historically, new social movement theories emerged mainly in the Western Europe during the 1970s and 1980s were theoretically rooted in the continental European traditions of social theory and political philosophy (Cohen, 1985; Buechler,

2000; Klandermans, 1991; Klandermans and Tarrow, 1988; Larana, Hank Johnston, and Joseph R. Gusfield 1994; and Picardo, 1997). New social movement theories formulated as a theoretical response to the movements emerged in the structural conditions of the advanced industrial countries in the West. By the end of 1980s, the major political parties in Europe lost their legitimacy which created conducive socio-political circumstances for the emergence of new social movements. Johnston, Larana and Gusfield pointed out this fact and observed that "...de-legitimization of major political parties in Europe at the end of the 1980s..." and concurrently "...nontraditional parties" gained acceptance in Germany, Austria, Italy and France (1994, 3).

One could derive a common argument in all the different versions of the new social movement theories. All the movements that emerged in the post world war II period were qualitatively different from the earlier movements in terms of the questions they posed, the social base of the movements, repertoire of their contentions and son on. Hence, they all questioned the inadequacy of conventional Marxist paradigm in understanding and conceptualising these movements. Classical Marxism conceived movements in connection with production system and consequently the centrality of working class in organizing movements for larger structural changes. According to few authors, sociological studies of social movements in 20<sup>th</sup> century mainly "dominated first by theories of ideology and later by theories of organization and rationality" (Johnston et al. 1994, 3). Thus, according to them, these theories were insufficient and inadequate to understand and examine movements such as peace movements, student movements, the anti-nuclear energy protests, minority nationalism, gay rights, women's



rights, animal rights, alternative medicine, fundamentalist religious movements and new age and ecological movements that emerged predominantly in the 1970s and 1980s. In this historical context, new social movement theories attempted to confront this theoretical challenge. In reference to the works of both Melucci (1989) and Larana (1993), Johnston et al. (1994) made an important remark that the concept new social movement designates, “an approach rather than a theory” and they added that “it is not a set of general propositions that have been verified empirically but just an attempt to identify certain common characteristics in contemporary social movements and develop analytical tools to study them” (6).

In this backdrop, it is worth noting some of the main characteristic features of the new social movements suggested by Alan Scott (1990). According to him, certain common characteristics of new social movements were largely based on the aspects such as types of demands they pose, their organization forms, their ideologies and also in connection with the changes happened in the society where these movements emerged. In this characterisation, he emphasized the cultural character of new social movements and also described that new social movement as having “loose organizational structure and their emphasis upon life-style, rather than conventionally political issues” (14). In addition to this, he writes, new social movements are “primarily social” and it can be “located within civil society” (17). Therefore, he argues that broadly the aims of new social movements are to bring about “social change through the transformation of values, personal identities and symbols” (18). According to Scott, unlike workers’ movement which had mainly located in the polity, new social movements can be situated in civil society. As far as aims were concerned, workers’ movements aimed at

“political integration and economic rights” whereas new movements focused on making changes in “values and life styles” or trying to defend “civil society”.

Subsequently, Scott made an attempt to distinguish new social movements from old movements. According to him, new social movements express their demands in terms of “autonomy rather than citizenship” (23). For him, there are different aspects involved in the notion of autonomy which can be categorized as “personal autonomy”, “group autonomy” and “autonomy of struggle.” The latter can be explicated as the “insistence that the movement and those it represents be allowed to fight their own corner without interference from other movements, and without subordinating their demands to other external priorities” (20). Thus, here he articulates the question of personal autonomy and group autonomy as political questions. He added another significant feature of new social movement that is they “focus on limited or single issues” (26).

Similarly, Johnston et al. (1994) also tried to discern some of the fundamental characteristic features of new social movements which are discussed below. However, they reminded us that it may not be possible to find all these feature in l the current movements and also not possible to coin all current movements as new. They construct the first characteristic feature of new social movement in connection with the structural roles of the participants. In old movements such as workers’ movements or labour movements, the social base of the participants can be identified through their structural location. Mostly the participants belong to a homogenous structural location, whereas, Johnston et al. argue that “NSMs do not bear a clear relation to the structural roles of the participants. There is a tendency for the social base of new social movements to

transcend class structure” (6). They reached this conclusion by observing the participation of the people, who belong to various social categories such as youth, gender, sexual orientation and/or profession. For them, the empirical references to validate this argument were Green and anti-nuclear movements in Europe and the ecological movements, animal and children rights movements in the United States.

Another important characteristic has been identified in respect to the notion on ideology and the authors claim that the notion of ideology in the context of NSMs, “stand in sharp contrast to the working-class movement and to the Marxist conception of ideology as a unifying and totalizing element for collective action” (6-7). According to their view, new social movements manifest “pluralisms of ideas and values” and similarly they are inclined to have “pragmatic orientations and search for institutional reforms that enlarge the systems of members’ participation in decision making” (7). In congruent with this argument, scholars like Offe (1985); Cohen (1985); and Larana (1992 and 1993) also share more or less the similar views. Consequently, their fundamental argument is that we cannot simply and exclusively categorise an organisation or movement as conservative or liberal, right or left, capitalist or socialist since new social movements embodied a blend of many of these ideologies and it must be analytically not possible to locate these movements within an overarching ideology. Thus, akin to Allan Scott’s perspective, these authors also emphasized the new social movement’s attempts to expand the civil society space in the society.

Construction of identity is another significant characteristic feature of these movements. Alberto Melucci, an Italian social movement theorist gave emphasis to the idea of

collective identity in his studies on social movement. His studies (1985, 1989 and 1995) focused on the cultural and symbolic dimensions in connection with issues of identity instead of the demands with respect to the economic aspects, a predominant feature of working-class movements. According to him, the focus of the social movement has been shifted from “class, race and other more traditional political issues towards the cultural ground” (1995, 41). For him, *identity* was not a given thing but a constituted one in the course of collective action. Thus, collective identity implies a constructivist view of collective action. Melucci considers collective action “as the result of purposes, resources, and limits, as a purposive orientation constructed by means of social relationships within a system of opportunities and constraints”. According to him, people are acting collectively in which they ‘construct’ their action “by means of ‘organized’ investments. They define in cognitive terms the field of possibilities and limits they perceive while at the same time activating their relationships so as to give sense to their ‘being together’ and to the goals they pursue”. This togetherness constructs a notion on “we” but it is not a linear notion instead it has been constructed through the processes such as “interaction”, “negotiation” and even the “opposition of different orientation” (43). Having said this, he defines:

Collective identity is an interactive and shared definition produced by several individuals (or groups at a more complex level) and concerned with the orientations of action and the field of opportunities and constraints in which the action takes place. By "interactive and shared," I mean a definition that must be conceived as a process because it is constructed and negotiated through a repeated activation of the relationships that link individuals (or groups) (44).

By following this definition, he proposes three significant aspects of collective identity in which the first is, “collective identity as a process involves cognitive definitions

concerning the ends, means, and field of action” (44). Second, it is “a process refers thus to a network of active relationships between the actors, who interact, communicate, influence each other, negotiate, and make decisions” and finally, “a certain degree of emotional investment, which enables individuals to feel like part of a common unity, is required in the definition of a collective identity” (45). A large number of movements can be noted as an exemplar of this characteristic of collective identity. A few studies which are noted in Johnston et al. (1994) are the *Catalan* and *Basque* movements in Spain, the *Asian* and *Hispanic* movements in the United States. We could also incorporate ethnic movements in different parts of the world, women’s movement and gay, lesbian and transgender rights movements in emerged globally under this category. According to them, new social movements, “often involve personal and intimate aspects of human life” which constitute another significant characteristic feature. In terms of organizational aspects, new social movements can be seen as “segmented, diffuse, and decentralized” which are contradictory to the “cadre-led and centralized bureaucracies of traditional mass parties” (8).

In a similar fashion, Buechler (2000) also locates certain common themes which were very predominant in most of the new social movements. According to him, different variants of new social movement theories “operate with some model of a societal totality” and it contributes the context for the emergence of collective action. Although varies in envisioning the nature of societal totality, they all commonly agreed on the point that “...a historically specific social formation as the structural backdrop of the contemporary forms of collective action...” constitutes the first important common theme (46). In his view, the second theme constitutes the “...causal claim that links

these new movements and to this societal totality” that means to see the new social movements as responses to “modernity or postmodernity”. Therefore, he further substantiated this argument by observing that “if modern or postmodern societal totalities are defined by capitalist markets, bureaucratic states, scientised relationships, and instrumental rationality, new social movements are historically specific responses to these features of the modern and postmodern condition” (46).

A third theme, Buechler identifies is the spread out of social base over different and diverse sections of the people in the society. Then by citing the work of Eder 1993; Kriesi 1989; and Offe 1985, he pointed out that as far as these analysts are concerned, the new social movements are rooted in “some fraction of (new) middle class”. But on the other hand, for others, these “are no longer rooted in the class structure, but rather in other statuses such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, or citizenship that are central in mobilizing social movements” (46). Besides, another group of analysts argued that “even these statuses are less important than ideological consensus over movement values and beliefs” (47). The subsequent themes he discussed such as ‘collective identity’ ‘politicization of everyday life,’ ‘the values,’ ‘the role of cultural and symbolic forms of resistance,’ and ‘organizational forms’ have already been explained in this chapter.

Given this, let us now turn our attention to two important versions or internal distinctions in the domain of new social movement theories. Buechler (2000) made this distinction as *political* and *cultural* versions of new social movement theory. Indeed, a major criticism against new social movement theories is its lack of political analysis.

But, on the contrary Buechler proposes that political version of new social movement theory mainly informed by neo-Marxist scholarship. Further, he argues that in this version, “the central societal totality is advanced capitalism and there is a strong connection between advanced capitalism and new social movements” (48). Then he added that the political version of new social movement theory “is macro oriented in general and state oriented in particular”. Concurrently, this version validates the significance of “identity formation, grievance definition, and interest articulation as intermediate steps in the process of movement activism.” Moreover, the most significant attribute of this perspective is that it is not totally discarding the prospective of class-based or worker based movements. Instead, it accepts the value of class-based or worker based movements in conjunction with all other social movements based on various constituencies such as race, gender, nationality and other identities like gay, lesbian and transgender and all others. Thus, as stated by Buechler, this perspective laid stress on the latent potentiality for positive and progressive change if suitable association and coalitions can be formed between class-based and nonclass-based movements (Ibid).

The cultural version of new social movement theory is theoretically foregrounded in Post-Marxism (Buechler 2000). In fact, post-Marxist theory cannot be conceived as a single and coherent theoretical framework. Instead, it refers to a lucid and flexible theoretical categorization and it encompasses diverse intellectual streams. Stuart Sim, a scholar in post-Marxism, refers to this fact. According to him, “post-Marxism is by no means a homogenous movement, and that in fact it covers a range of positions, not all of which are necessarily compatible with each other.” Therefore, he further added that

“post-Marxists can variously want to reject, revitalise, or renegotiate the terms of their intellectual contract with Marxism” (1998, 1). In another account, Goldstein observed that “Althusser’s account of ideology and critique of humanist and Stalinist theory as well as Foucault’s genealogies of discourse” as post-Marxist theoretical initiations (2005, 21). Tormey and Townshend (2006) take a more extreme position and argue that Cornelius Castoriadis, Deleuz and Guattari and Lyotard as post-Marxists although their emphasis may differ in many ways. Despite all these differences, it is possible to draw out a common theme from post-Marxism, that is, unlike traditional Marxism which defends the primacy of the universal category such as class, structuralist understanding of the social structure (base/superstructure dichotomy and the deterministic role of base and superstructure) and the essentialist notion on history, it recognises the multiple democratic struggles and social antagonism in terms of sexual, racial, class and ethnic divisions of social life and its anti-essentialist conceptualization. The Argentine and Belgian political theorists known as Earnesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe respectively were considered as the most prominent advocates of post-Marxism. Before I enter into the post-Marxist view of Earnesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe and how they envisaged new social movements, let me summarise Buechler’s account on the cultural version of new social movement theory.

According to Buechler (2000), post-Marxism provided the theoretical and intellectual resources for the cultural version of new social movement theory. He views, “the cultural version identifies the social totality in cultural or semiotic terms as an information society whose administrative codes conceal forms of domination”. Consequently, its emphasis on the “decentralized nature of both power and resistance,



so it is not particularly macro oriented or state centered but rather focuses on everyday life, civil society, and the creation of free spaces between state and civil society” (48). One of the major assumptions of this approach is that corresponding to the transformations ensued in industrial capitalism, the old worker based mobilisations for social activism also have been changed. The cultural version sees “activism as a defensive reaction to domination that can potentially challenge systemic imperatives, but it eschews the language of ‘progressive’ movements as invoking an unwanted metaphysics of history” (49). As we found in the earlier discussion, that almost all variants of new social movement theory commonly shared the position on the privilege they assign on non-class constituencies. Similarly, this cultural version also recognizes the prominence of non-class identity in the social base of new social movements. To end with, Buechler reminds us that this typology is merely an “ideal-typical sensitizing device” but at the same time, he points out that it will help us to “organize a variety of issues into two relatively coherent positions with a fair degree of internal consistency” (Ibid). Given the above discussion, I will make an attempt to look at how far the cultural version of new social movement theories are valid and convincing within the context of Laclau and Mouffe’s post-Marxist perspective on new social movements.

Earnesto Laclau, an Argentine and Chantal Mouffe, a Belgian political theorist are widely considered as founders of the intellectual tradition named as post-Marxism. Their joint work, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985) laid the foundation of post-Marxist framework. Laclau and Mouffe tried to construct a social and political theory that intends to grapple with the complexity and historical specificity of social antagonism that emerged in Europe since 1960s. They have drawn ideas from various

theoretical traditions such as Gramscian socialism, liberal democratic discourse on right, post-structuralism, post-analytic philosophy, phenomenology and Lacanian psycho-analysis. Smith (1998, 4) rightly observed that “their intellectual intervention can be termed as an anti-essentialist intervention in the Marxist tradition.” Post-Marxism, for Laclau and Mouffe, is an anti-essentialist remolding of Marxism. In a significant sense, it is a continuation of the Marxist project inspired by Marx’s critical theory, but at the same time, it moves beyond Marxism by critically reworking its conceptual presuppositions.

Laclau and Mouffe (1985), in the introduction of the book *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* explained the theoretical and material context in which they had written this book. According to them, Western Europe confronted new autonomous movements in the late 1970s and early 1980s. However, it had not been adequately addressed by the conventional left. Feminists, peace activists, environmentalists, lesbian and gay activists, and the movements of people of color had radically redefined the very meaning of leftist politics (1985, 1–5). In this context, they had written:

The new forms of social conflict have...thrown into crisis theoretical and political frameworks...[that] correspond to the classical discourses of the Left, and the characteristic modes in which it has conceived the agents of social change, the structuring of social spaces, and the privileged points for the unleashing of historical transformations (Ibid, 1-2).

According to the post-Marxist perspective of Laclau and Mouffe, the novelty of the new social movements does not consist solely in their articulation of new demands. In addition to their politicization of new areas of the social, these movements also establish somewhat new forms of political contestation. While discussing about the nature of new social movements, they maintained an equal distance from two dominant approaches.

The first one considers the subject of social change in these movements as “marginal or peripheral with regard to the working class” and the second approach conceives the actors of these movements as “a revolutionary substitute for a working class which has been integrated into the system”<sup>18</sup>. Here, they undoubtedly argue that these two approaches are incompatible with their view and stated:

Everything we have said so far, however, indicates that there are no privileged points for the unleashing of a socialist political practice; this hinges upon a 'collective will' that is laboriously constructed from a number of dissimilar points. Nor can we agree, therefore, with the other dominant tendency in the discussion of new social movements, which consists in a priori affirmation of their progressive nature. The political meaning of a local community movement, of an ecological struggle, of a sexual minority movement, is not given from the beginning: it crucially depends upon its hegemonic articulation with other struggles and demands (Ibid, 87).

Later, Smith attempted to interpret Laclau and Mouffe’s perspective on new social movements and proposed that they never considered the uniqueness of the new social movements involved merely in their articulation of new demands. Over and above to the politicization of new areas of social, these movements also establish a somewhat new form of political contestation. “Their struggles are irreducibly complex and plural in nature. Because classical Marxism presupposes the existence of ‘universal’ subjects and conceptualizes the social as a ‘rational, transparent order,’ it cannot adequately capture these movements’ complex negotiations of difference” (1998, 2-3).

Laclau and Mouffe have explained the socio-political features of the terrain where new social movements have arisen. As part of it, they succinctly problematised the notion that radical struggles were part of a distant historical reality and highlighted that this

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<sup>18</sup> Here, they are mainly referring to the work of Herbert Marcuse, who was one of the leading figures in the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory.

notion constructed in the “neo-capitalist euphoria” that was constituted during the two decades after the Second World War. This period offered “an unlimited capacity for transformist absorption on the part of the system, and showed a linear tendency towards a homogeneous society in which every antagonistic potential would be dissolved, and each collective identity fixed in a system of differences” (Ibid, 158). Antithetical to this view, they tried to demonstrate the complex and contradictory aspects of this in the following passage. They write:

the complexity and the frequently contradictory aspects of this process of expansion, as the very act of satisfying a wide range of social demands during the apogee of the Welfare State, far from assuring the indefinite integration of the dominant hegemonic formations, frequently laid bare the arbitrary character of a whole set of relations of subordination (Ibid).

In this backdrop, they have seen the creation of a different environment which makes possible a “new extension of egalitarian equivalences,” and this inaugurated the development of the democratic revolution in new directions. For them, “it is in this terrain that there have arisen those new forms of political identity which, in recent debates, have frequently been grouped under the name of *new social movements*”. (Ibid, emphasis is mine). Later, they articulated that the term new social movement is not a satisfactory term albeit, they use the term to designate the diverse struggles such as urban, ecological, anti-authoritarian, anti-institutional, feminist, anti-racist, ethnic, regional or that of sexual minorities because “the common denominator of all of them would be their differentiation from workers' struggles, considered as 'class' struggles” (159). Thus, the term *new social movement* attracted attention not because of the arbitrary grouping of the diverse movements into a category opposed to that of class instead, “the *novel* role they play in articulating that rapid diffusion of social

conflictuality to more and more numerous relations which is characteristic today of advanced industrial societies” (159-160).

Taking the insights of the above discussions on post-Marxism and new social movements into consideration, let us briefly revisit the internal variations in new social movement theories suggested by Buechler. What makes more interesting is the cultural version of new social movement theories informed by post-Marxism. While going through Laclau and Mouffe, one could observe that they give an overemphasis on ‘culture’ over ‘politics’ as Buechler remarked. However, one could also argue that they gave primacy to politics, democratic revolutions and new antagonism in the context of neo-capitalism and advanced industrialism. Thus, it is unwarranted to argue that new social movement theory informed by post-Marxism is predominantly cultural in nature whereas, they take culture as a serious entity and a site of different struggle.

Thus, post-Marxist approach has ushered two tasks: 1) it problematised conventional Marxist approach to social movements and 2) it also interrogated resource mobilisation approach. By way of this, they questioned the primacy of structural contradiction as well as and it is relevant to look at the structural contradiction in a postcolonial capitalist society like India to understand the social movements that emerged in the last three decades.

## **Conclusion**

In the light of this broad critical overview of social movement theory approaches, I argue that no theory on social movement can persuasively conceptualise contemporary

social movements, particularly in the non-Western societies without addressing macro and micro-level interrelationship with collective action. The first two approaches, collective behavior and resource mobilization, have limited theoretical significance in applying to the empirical situations in the post-colonial societies. The relationship between social movements and the state has great significance and one needs to see how it becomes relevant in different contexts. The other two approaches – political process and new social movement – provided insights on how macro-level changes affect the organisation of social movements. But their approaches on macro political structures are not conceptually and theoretically engaging with any new conceptualizations in the domain of new political economy, political sociology and social science in general. Therefore, “systemic power relations and structural inequality” (Buechler, 2000, 39) is not a serious issue as far as these approaches are concerned.

The relationship between postcolonial developmental state and movement activism is a recurrent and vibrant theme in the present conjecture. The class nature and broadly the ideology of the state played a crucial role in the distribution of resources and power. The question of ‘agency’ is another central theme of this study. Though the new social movement theories’ approach to identity is appealing, the question of agency is not dealt as seriously. There are some minor efforts to look at the question of agency though it was mainly framed in a liberal fashion. In this study, I relied on poststructuralist and feminist scholarship rather than new social movement frames to analyse the question of agency. Therefore, this study makes an attempt to look beyond social movement framework to explain the questions of marginality, development and the notion of agency.

## **Chapter 3**

# **Social Movement Studies in India: Within and Beyond Sociology**

As discussed in the last chapter that social movement theory approach is inadequate to conceptualise the contemporary social movements and their politics in the present conjuncture. Indeed, an attempt has been made in this chapter to provide a critical overview of the studies on social movements in India and how these studies have been influenced and informed by the movement framework. This critical review has been grounded on the theoretical insights provided by the postcolonial political sociology perspective.

This chapter is presented in five sections. The first section looks at social movement studies published in India in the 1960s and 70s. Mainly the works of noted political scientists and sociologists have been reviewed including the limitations in the study of social movements during this period. The second section primarily focuses on the history of the social movement studies as an independent subfield of Indian sociology in the 1980s. During this period, sociologists mainly focused on peasant movements in their studies. However, they overlooked the contribution of subaltern studies which has been critically assessed in this section. The third section deals with the shift in movement studies from 1990s to the contemporary context. As part of this enquiry, this section aims to address two basic questions: a) how far the studies produced in this period (1990s-present context) succeeded in extensively conceptualising those movements and

collective actions; b) to what extent these studies assisted the sub area of movement studies to grow further. Fourth section looks at the conceptual and theoretical issues involved in the tribal/adivasi movement studies in India. The principal aim of this section is to mark the difference as well the continuity of the present study's approach from previous tribal/adivasi movement studies in India. And in the final section, an attempt has been made to provide the interface between adivasi studies and postcolonial political sociology.

### **Social Movement Studies in India during 1960s-1970s**

In India, political scientists and sociologists were mainly engaged in the studies of social movements in the 1960s.<sup>19</sup> Amongst which political scientists dominated over sociologists in the terrain of social movement studies. Rajni Kothari, one of the leading political scientists in India in the 1960s and 70s emphasised the notion of “direct action”. According to him, it “can be defined as an extra-constitutional political technique that takes the form of a group action, is aimed at some political change and is directed against the government in power” (1960, 27). Shah (2002) rightly pointed out the limitations of this approach. Here, ‘political change’ acquired a narrow and reductive meaning and it was mainly confined to the change in the government. It is also explained how these terms have acquired wider and more nuanced meanings and conceptual understandings in the contemporary postcolonial condition.

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<sup>19</sup>A few noted are: Kothari 1960; Bayley 1962; Desai 1965; Phadke 1966 and Moore Jr. 1967.



Similar to Kothari and many others, noted sociologist A R Desai in the mid-1960s observed:

The movements of public protests not merely continue even after the establishment of a Parliamentary democracy in India, but as some observers like Bayley, Kothari, Harrison, Weiner and others have indicated, these movements have been increasing in number and have been gathering momentum, threatening even the very existence of the Parliamentary Government which has emerged in India after the British withdrawal (1965, 299).

This observation marked an anxiety in the protests of the public domain on various issues. One of the main reasons for these protests were the dissonance between aspirations of common people and the provisions and measures offered by various institutions of the postcolonial state. However, the position to conceive these protests as a threat to the parliamentary democracy may not hold well in the current academic parlance. Another trend one could observe that some of the noted studies appeared in the 1960s and early 1970s (Alvi, 1965; Singh, 1966; Gough, 1968; Sen, 1972; Dhanagare, 1974) generally followed a traditional Marxian framework to understand social movements.

In the 1970s, among the noted studies<sup>20</sup> on social movements, most of them have been contributed by sociologists and social anthropologists. T K Oommen (2010), claimed that his study on ‘Bhoodan-gramdan movement’ (1972) is the first book on “social movements in independent India by an Indian sociologist” (13). Kathleen Gough (1976),

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<sup>20</sup>Gough, 1976; Badrinath, 1977; Oommen, 1977; Pratap, 1977; Mukherji, 1977; Shah, 1977; Thapar, 1977; Desai, 1979; Rao, 2006 [1979].

a British anthropologist and feminist, mainly studied the social movements among Indian peasantry and conceived those struggles as class struggles. She mainly challenged Barrington Moore Jr.'s notions on Indian peasantry and argued that the Indian peasantry had radical and revolutionary potential. During that period there were two prominent views on peasant movements in India. The first view proposed that these movements emerged only after independence and located mainly in the social and cultural realm. As per the second view, peasant movements existed since colonial period and continued even after independence. They fought against colonial rulers as well as zamindars, landlords, money lenders, revenue agents, bureaucrats, police and military forces. As a result, these movements were characterised as political and cultural. Gough strongly endorsed the second view and validated her arguments by looking at around 77 various peasant uprisings in pre and post independence period. The fivefold classification of these revolts made by Gough in terms of their "goals, ideology, and methods of organization" can be outlined as "(1) Restorative rebellions to drive out the Britishers and restore earlier rulers; (2) Religious movements; (3) Social banditry; (4) Terrorist vengeance for collective justice, and (5) Mass insurrections for the redress of particular grievances (6).

Two important essays written by T K Oommen and Partha Nath Mukherji on social movements had appeared in the journal, *Sociological Bulletin* in 1977. Both these essays discussed the conceptual and methodological challenges confronted by the Indian sociological studies while engaging with social movements in the independent India. T K Oommen (1977) attempted to discern the inadequacies of structural functional approach in the study of social movements in India. Subsequently, as an effort to build an overarching

framework to understand social movements, he divided the social system into “pre-political” and “secular”. He observed that “system characteristics of a society affect the ethos and style of social movements in that society” (16). However, his notion on the system was highly problematic. In his account, pre-political refers to a primitive society in which “society may mainly express its values in a religious vocabulary; its mobilisational efforts may be based on communal or primordial attachments” (Ibid). But later, as a result of the emergence of the nation state, he writes, “this vocabulary may get re-defined to suit new conditions; it may be transformed into ‘secular’. In that society, he observes:

Mobilisational efforts may be increasingly anchored around civil collectivities. However, the movements will neither have the potentialities to root out the existing system completely nor will they succumb to the traditional structures entirely. Essentially then, social movements provide the stage for confluence between the old and new values and structures (Ibid).

This observation clearly shows that Oommen’s perspective is foregrounded on tradition/modern dichotomy. Pre-political or primitive conceived as traditional where every mobilisational effort was rooted on either communal or primordial reflects an Orientalist vision of Indian society. Similarly, the view that after independence the society has become “secular” and all mobilisational efforts are civil collectives needs a critical scrutiny. As far as his understanding is concerned, movements can be categorized into three which are charismatic, ideological and organisational. It should be noted, on the basis of many of the recent empirical studies including this, that these typologies are not sufficient to explain the complex constellation of contemporary social movements.

Partha Nath Mukherji (1977), on the other hand, looks at social movement in relation to social change. According to him, social movement is the outcome of social structure and

will create consequences for social structure. Thus, he perceives social movement as one of the important agents of change in the society. In this context, he suggests that “a sociologically meaningful study of a social movement will remain incomplete unless both these aspects are welded into a single theoretical framework (1977, 38). Along similar lines of Oommen, he also attempted to look at social movements from a typology which includes quasi-movement, social movement and revolution. He proposes to see it in terms of a “hierarchy of controls”. Thus, according to him, “a revolution subsumes social movements and quasi-movements, and social movements subsume quasi-movements” (48-49). On the basis of this understanding, Mukherji has developed a conceptual framework to examine social movements that can be illustrated in the following table.

**Table 3.1 Goals of Mobilisation for Collective Action directed towards:  
System Change and Intra Systemic Change**

	Change Promoting/Change Resisting	Change Promoting/Change Resisting
Institutional Means	<i>A</i>  Quasi Movements (Collective Protests, Strikes)	<i>B</i>  Quasi Movement to Social Movement (Transitional) – (Union claims for Managerial Powers)
Institutional and Non-Institutional Means	<i>B</i>  Quasi Movements (Tebhaga Movement)	Social Movements and revolutionary movements (Sarvodaya and Naxalbari Movements; Russian, Chinese revolutions)

Source: (Ibid, 51)

Subsequently, he offers an explanation for this illustration where he writes: “the paradigm is not meant to suggest that *A* necessarily leads to *B'*, *B''*, which in turn necessarily lead to *C*”. But, he writes, “when *C* does come to exist, it is unlikely that it matures without germinating in situations *A*, *B'* *B''*”. Therefore, proper movement study must discover the conditions under which “*A*, *B'* *B''*” ripens into a full-fledged social movement and the prediction of social change in probabilistic terms” (52). The problem which I find in this explanation is that it is strongly grounded on the deterministic nature of social structure.

In another study, Ghanshyam Shah (1977) gives a detailed account of two protest movements that took place in the Indian states of Bihar and Gujarat in 1974-75. The book is divided into two parts. Part one deals with the political unrest after the declaration of emergency in Gujarat. In the second part, the author focuses on the movement occurred in Bihar during the same period. These descriptions are very rich in terms of empirical details however, analytically and conceptually, the study is very weak. The study failed to situate and examine the movements in a proper theoretical framework. A R Desai, another Marxist sociologist, has spent considerable amount of time for studying peasant and agrarian movements in rural India. His edited collection published in 1979 deals with the peasant struggles during colonial period. Now, this work can be perceived as an introductory level of engagement in the area of peasant studies at that point in time. One of the central arguments of this book, according to A R Desai, is that the Congress party was not merely a negative (or ‘comprador’) constituent aspect which obstruct and denounces peasant struggle, rather an important factor the left wanted to fight to surmount in order to channelise struggle in proper direction. By this, it had created

complex outcomes that, at that point in time, were helpful for unrestraining of such struggles but at some other points holding it back.

In the late 1970s, M S A Rao has edited a volume on social movements in India. This is divided into two parts. Part one contains six sections and the second, a select bibliography of social movement studies. In the first section, Rao discusses the conceptual issues concerned with the study of social movements in India. Many authors and critics recognised and valued this volume as a landmark in the development of sociology in general and social movement studies in particular. Most of them agreed with the fact that this volume “marked a shift from the conventionalist structural-functional approach to the study” of social movements in India. Instead, it focused on the “dynamic processes and movements highlighting conflict and contradiction as the basis of protest, reform, transformation and revolution” (1978, V).

According to Rao, major conceptual problems are connected with various aspects of the movements such as “definition and classification” of social movements, “genesis of the movement”, its “ideology and identity”, “collective mobilization, organization and leadership”, “internal dynamics and routinization” and the “social consequences” the movements have been creating. He did not find any validity in applying theories such as strain theory and revitalization theory in order to look at the genesis of movements. However, he believes that the theory of relative deprivation – with suitable modifications - has great possibility in explaining the genesis of movements because “...it places the perception of contradiction, conflict, and protest at the centre of social movements” (XVII). Alongside, he comes to a conclusion that “the structural conditions of relative deprivation provide only the necessary conditions”. Furthermore, “sufficient conditions

are provided by the perception of a situation and by the estimate of capabilities by certain leaders that they can do something to remedy the situation” (5). According to Mukherji (1977), another important aspect of social movement is its ideology and identity. In the case of ideology, he mainly refers the works of Marx (1904), Mannheim (1960) and Geertz (1964) in order to get different views on the same. At the end of this essay, he raises some methodological questions relevant to the study of social movements. According to him, “social history” is an important method in the sociological investigation of social movements because it will help to gather historical data– usually perceived as a skill of historians – concerned to movement. But he insists that the interpretation of such data must be sociological. Participant observation, as he puts it, is another significant method to collect data in the case of ongoing movements. Therefore, he reminds us that if someone wants to study a social movement he/she must be trained in diverse techniques such as participant observation, survey method, historical and case history method, interview and content analysis.

Dipankar Gupta (2010 [1977]), was the first Indian sociologist who conducted a study on an urban social movement – The Shiva Sena Movement – in India. This was a study based on field work in Bombay during 1972-73. In this study, Gupta argues for the primacy of the economic domain for understanding the genesis and dynamics of social movements. His theoretical framework is informed mainly by the contributions of two Marxist scholars, Althusser and Poulantzas. According to him, the contradictions appeared in the economic structure of Bombay in the form of “increasing unemployment and economic deprivation”, chiefly among the lower and middle classes, paved the way for the emergence of Shiva Sena. The nature and quality of capitalism and

industrialisation in India, particularly in Bombay, made it worse and troublesome. In addition to this, by looking at the “politics of nativism”, he argues that “the existence of communal cooperative history barely six years before the birth of Shiva Sena made it easy for the latter to whip up communal and nativist passions by focusing on the fact that the outsiders in Bombay were better off than the Maharashtrians” (179).

Furthermore, he also analysed the limitations and constraints of the ideology of Shiv Sena by looking at the diverse class interests - mainly elite interests – which became prominent when they attempted to interact with other structures like classes, trade unions and political parties. Therefore, in his view, this study is also an attempt to understand urban context and environment “from the perspective of analyzing one organisation in interaction with other structures” (186).

### **Social Movement as a Subfield of Sociology in the 1980s**

By the end of 1970s, sociology of social movements constituted as a potential subfield in the terrain of Indian sociology. Scholarship on social movement in India since 1980s, in Oommen’s (2010) view, was largely informed by two theoretical traditions: structural functionalism or Marxism. He pointed out that the earlier tradition had an obsession with “order and integration” (2). According to him, those studies “do not make or claim any conceptual/theoretical breakthrough” nonetheless, “they do make significant contribution towards a clearer understanding of the empirical situation in India” (12-13). One could observe from a cursory survey of the major works on social movements published in the



1980s<sup>21</sup> that the historians and political scientists contributed significantly along with the sociologists in the study of social movements in the same period. However, often the noted sociologists who had studied social movements in the 1980s and 1990s (except a very few) didn't acknowledge the contribution of subaltern studies to the study of subaltern class' movements in general and peasant movements in particular. Perhaps, one of the reasons might be that the focus of most of the subaltern studies (Volume I to VI) was on Indian peasantry and peasant movements during the colonial period. However, there were a few studies (Chandra 1983; Das 1983; and Chakrabarty 1984), for instance, which extended their focus into the agrarian change, the mobilisation of agricultural workers and trade unions in the postcolonial period. Thus, it seems reasonable to observe that sociologists mainly concentrated on contemporary social movements and largely neglected the contribution of subaltern studies (though their approach is historical) in the study of social movements.

Another significant feature of this period (1980s) was the absence of studies on dalit movements except a few studies on tribal/adivasi movement. Theoretical framing, analytical contributions and methodological procedure of subaltern studies offer great potentiality and possibility in the conceptualisation of contemporary social movements with regard to the question of agency and subjectivity of social movement actors. Though

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<sup>21</sup> See for instance, the study of *radical or revolutionary movements* (Banerjee, 1980 and 1984; Panikkar, 1980; Ray, 1988), *Tribal Movements/Adivasi Assertions* (Singh, 1982 and 1983; Hardiman, 1987); *Urban Movement* (Gupta); *Peasant/Subaltern Movements* (Guha 1982, 1983, 1983a, 1984, 1985, 1987; Guha and Gayatri Chakravarti Spivak 1989; Alam, 1983; Chatterjee, 1983; Dhanagare, 1983; Oommen, 1984 and 1985; Gupta, 1985; Hanlem, 1988); *Backward Class Movements* (Rao, 1985); *Grass roots/Popular Movements* (Seth, 1984; Sarkar, 1985) and also about *general social movement theories* (Frank and Marta Fuentes, 1987; Dhanagare and J John, 2002).

the main contributors to these volumes were historians, their frame of reference and conceptual apparatus goes beyond the conventional historical writing and is located in the interdisciplinary terrain of social sciences. Indeed, subaltern studies theoretically departed from both colonialist and nationalist historiographies “by bringing in the peasantry as a subject of history, endowed with its own distinctive forms of consciousness and making sense of and acting upon the world on its own terms” (Chatterjee 2000, 10). However, their object of investigation was not contemporary peasant movements instead they mainly focused on the state and peasantry in the colonial period.

For instance, Ranajit Guha looked at a series of peasant revolts occurred in colonial India during the period from 1783 to 1900. Guha observed that peasant insurgency has hitherto been represented in the scholarship predominantly in two ways. In the case of colonial historiography, it was conceived as violent infringements against the peaceful life of the public hence considered merely as a law and order issue. On the other hand, nationalist historiography perceived these insurgencies as immature or lesser developed expressions of nationalist or socialist sentiments. Guha, drawing from the work of Antonio Gramsci, meticulously argued that these readings are inadequate, insufficient and indeed a misrepresentation of these revolts. In this work, he explored the discourse of counter-insurgency to deconstruct it as a mirror image of the discourse of peasant insurgency. Through an identification of six elementary aspects – negation, ambiguity, modality, solidarity, transmission and territoriality – which constituted the insurgent peasant consciousness, Guha puts forward his central theoretical proposition that this peasant consciousness has its own paradigmatic form, which differed from others. According to

Partha Chatterjee, this theoretical proposition posed a “basic challenge to the methodological procedures followed not only by bourgeois economists and sociologists (including those of the Chayanovian and ‘moral economy’ varieties) searching for the ‘rational peasant’ (however defined), but also by many Marxist scholars writing on the agrarian question” (Chatterjee 2000, 14). In his view, mapping an ‘Indian history of peasant struggle’ is absolutely a different project from writing a ‘history of peasant struggles in India’. The difference between them marked a distinct approach to historiography. Thus, a novel contribution has been made by subaltern studies to the area of peasant studies in India. In the case of the latter, historical evidences on peasant struggles organised on the basis of a predetermined framework in which “the fundamental concepts and analytical relations are taken as given, established in their generality by the forms of a universal history”. Whereas, the former, Chatterjee writes:

Seeks to discover in that material the forms of an immanent historical development, fractured, distorted, and forced into the grid of ‘world history’ only by the violence of colonialism. The framework of this other history does not take as given its appointed place within the order of a universal history, but rather submits the supposedly universal categories to a constant process of interrogation and contestation, modifying, transforming and enriching them (18).

Here, I am not focusing on the arguments for and against subaltern studies. There are many inadequacies one could find in the trajectory of subaltern studies however, one cannot deny the contribution of it in unraveling the agency and subjectivity of Indian peasantry during the colonial period.

### **Transitions in the Movements Studies: From 1990s till Date**

A major shift that could be observed in the movement studies, in the 1990s, is the growing attention on the various categories/typologies of movements along with generic

studies on social movements. It includes Dalit movements (Zelliot 1996; Gore 1993; Robb 1993; Omvedt 1994), Women's Movements (Gandhi and Shah 1992; Kumar 1993; Ray 1999 and Akerkar 1995), Tribal/Adivasi Movements (Baviskar 2011), Environmental Movements (Guha 1997), Religious and Hindu Nationalist Movements (Jeffrelot 1998) and so on. Indeed, this resulted as a consequence of the movements that emerged in the 1970s and 80s under various categories which demanded more scholarly and theoretical attention. How far these studies succeeded in extensively conceptualising those movements and collective actions is a valid question. In the early 1990s, Ghanshyam Shah classified the social movements into eight types which include peasant movements, tribal movements, dalit movements, backward caste movements, women's movements, students' movements, middle class movements, and industrial working class movements. This typology, proposed by Shah, looks at the "socio-economic characteristics of the participants and the issues involved" (1990, 27). However, he rightly identifies that this is not an exhaustive categorization of movements because this typology also reinforces omission of certain other movements.

1990s marked another important moment in the history of movement studies with the publication of a large number of studies on dalit movements (A noted few are Zelliot 1992; Gore 1993; Robb 1993; and Omvedt 1994). Indeed, it signifies the formulation of 'dalit' as a new category in the movement studies. The term 'dalit' acquired its new meaning, political and academic significance as a result of the emergence of Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra in the 1970s. Zelliot (1992) meticulously mapped this transition from untouchables to dalits in her study on Ambedkar movements. While dealing with dalit politics, religion and literature, this collection of essays covers the

period, history and developments of the lower castes movements from 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 1980s.

M S Gore (1993) made a sociological inquiry into the life, writings and other related activities of Ambedkar against untouchability and caste oppressions. He attempted to comprehend Ambedkar's ideology of protest by locating them in the larger context of sociological knowledge on social movements and ideology. Subsequently he made an attempt to define the notion of social movements. Gore formulates a theoretical and conceptual framework and explicates the meaning of the term ideology. According to him, "ideology as a system of ideas which gives legitimacy to an existing or proposed system of relationships, and correspondingly supports an action programme to sustain or subvert the prevailing system, may prove more useful" (1993, 29-30). In his view, the concept of 'ideology' "indirectly assumes that a certain philosophy informs the particular view of life." Above all, his references lead to "substantive system of values, the imputed system of relationships and the action implications of ideology" (31). One could observe a strong influence of classical Marxist notions in the above illustrations on ideology. Paradoxically, when he attempts to interconnect ideology with knowledge, he moves very close to American sociologist Robert K Merton's ideas on the sociology of knowledge. But this paradigm cannot be discussed without referring to the broader sociological tradition of structural-functionalism. In this back drop, it is reasonable to argue that the theoretical framework of M S Gore was greatly influenced by the paradigm of structural functionalism. Division of labour and caste hierarchy is closely related in the long history of caste oppression, especially against dalits, in the larger socio-economic history of India. Therefore, it was very visible that often dirty jobs were assigned to lower caste

people and were also controlled by the upper castes. In this backdrop, a collection of essays edited by noted historian Peter Robb (1993) focuses on the labour conditions of the lower strata of the society. These collected essays brought new perspectives on different modes of work in which dalits engaged and the change process that they brought in. It clearly unravels the socio-economic disadvantages of dalits in different parts of India and how the inherited statuses were intertwined with their occupation. This book attempts to historically investigate the story of labour from the eighteenth century to the late 1980s. As part of this endeavor, it locates the continuity of certain obsolete past practices in the present society, critically assessing the 'modern' notions of work, its separation from other aspects of daily life, its 'commoditization' and class implications in Indian context. The essays published in this work offer new insights on how ideological and religious nexus lead to larger economic changes and also recognise the specificities that resonate against entrenched social conditions and attitudes. Labour migration and protest were the two important forms of collective action. The connection between labour and social hierarchy has been meticulously investigated in this book in a comparative perspective. This important contribution contains an extensive critical essay by the editor and the illustrative papers contributed by the scholars such as Anderson (1993); Bates and Marina Carter (1993); Haan (1993); Engels (1993); Gooptu (1993) and Rodrigues and Nigel Crook (1993).

Another noted scholar who studied dalit movement in the 1990s was Gail Omvedt. In her book titled as *Dalits and Democratic Revolution* (1993), she traces the history of Ambedkar movements in the colonial India. This period covers the genesis of dalit movement from its origins to the death of B R Ambedkar in 1956. Omvedt tried to

examine the origin and development of caste from a historical materialist point of view. However, one can notice that she shifts from this Marxist position in her later writings on dalit and women movements in India with a focus on dalit movements in three states: Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka. She critically assesses the ideology, organisation and the interaction of these movements with freedom struggle mainly represented by Gandhi and Gandhism on the one hand and the class struggles of the workers and peasants within Marxist framework, on the other hand.

In the same year Omvedt published another book which discusses new social movements in Indian context. In this book, she looks at the movements that emerged in the 1970s and 80s such as anti-caste movement (of both the untouchables and the lower middle castes); the women's liberation movement; the farmers' movements which resisted the efforts to integrate them into a state controlled capitalist market system and the environmental movements centered against the devastating impacts of mainstream development and mega dam projects. Perhaps, Omvedt might be considered as one of the pioneering scholar in India who characterised these movements as new social movements for the first time. In addition, she was also known as an academic-activist participated in many of these movements. Here participant observation was used as a method of data collection and further she examined the ideologies of these movements. Her work starts from the analysis of the genesis of national movement in India and the ways in which socialist tradition was rooted within it. Later she investigates the decline of this tradition and the emergence of Naxalite revolt in the post independence period. She recognises the new movements, in the 1980s, as the responses against deeper socio-economic contradictions created by the long standing congress and elite rule in the post-colonial India. Alongside,

she also problematises the growing discrepancy between the “traditional Marxist” theory and the manifestations of Communist practices in the country since independence. Before concluding this discussion, it is worth noting how she differentiates new movements from the old. In her view, the old movements were mainly concerned with the “wage issues and conflicts of toilers with those who exploit them directly as owners of property [which] play a relatively small role” in the contemporary context. Contrary to that, the primary issue, as far as the new movements are concerned, is fight against dispossession of land, social rights, or existing social ties, often framed as constituting a community’s “culture” or “identity” (1993, 307). In brief, one could conclude that this was one of the first efforts to support and theorise new social movements that emerged on non-party politics.

Manoranjan Mohanty (1998), in his edited volume titled *People’s Rights: Social Movements and the State in the Third World* discerned that in terms of theoretical perspective, it departs from new social movement theory. According to him, they acknowledge the significance of the issues relating to caste, ethnic identity, gender and culture however, their volume integrates these questions with the “class question” and they believe that “class movements of workers and peasants are crucial social movements significantly affecting others” (9). He adds that “the prevailing dichotomy between class politics and social movements has been questioned by many of the authors” (10) who have contributed to this volume. Instead of looking at social movements as “single-issue struggles”, most of the authors who contributed to this volume conceived social movements in connection with the state which, according to Mohanty, makes the “distinct orientation of this volume” (12).



This volume prefers the term ‘people’s movements’ rather than social movements although the latter appears on the title of the book. Although it is very weak, Mohanty provides some justification for the replacement of social movements with people’s movements. According to him, the earlier one is “politically a more potent concept” than the latter one since the former carries the “legacy of anti-colonial struggle” and “...it was the people’s united struggle against colonialism which triggered a new imagination of post-colonial transformation” (17). Thus, for him, the term social movement is inadequate to capture this imagination and is also a vague concept. Secondly, the term people’s movements entail “class movements within its scope and at the same time covers the many movements for people’s rights – the movements of dalits, adivasis (tribal people), women and so on” (18). In addition to that, Mohanty writes:

As the essays in this volume argue, class politics, in order to be effective, has to be sensitive to the gender and ethnic issues, and the women’s movement to succeed, must address the class issue. Thus, the concept of ‘people’s movements’ is advanced as a core formulation for evolving a creative theory of democratic transformation (Ibid, 18).

This volume made an attempt to go beyond traditional Marxist analysis of social movements. However, it gives over emphasis to the class analysis. The second part of this book, titled as *People’s Movements*, is a clear indication of that. Except Gail Omvedt’s essay, rest of the authors focused on either farmers’ movements or agrarian struggles or the working class movements from a broad Marxian framework. Therefore, Mohanty reiterated that class politics must be responsive to caste and identity issues and, broadly, this is an attempt to integrate class politics with caste and identity politics.

In the contemporary context, a major effort to analyse social movement studies is done through the two volume anthology edited by T K Oommen (2010). Structured into five

sections, these two volumes have encompassed twenty-five chapters distributed under various themes and typologies such as religious and caste movements; regional, linguistic and tribal movements; peasant and labour movements; women's and students' movements; and ecological and environmental movements. In the first volume of this anthology, except two essays (Vivek Kumar, and Frederick S Downs), the rest of the articles were all published between 1960s and 1990s. Oommen argues that "a theory of society" is an essential precondition in any sociological analysis of social movements "because collective action is one of the possible responses to crises, which occur in society" (2). He also attempts to look at how collective action has been framed in the classical sociology of Durkheim, Weber and Marx. While examining this, he comes to the conclusion that "Durkheimian structural differentiation and Weberian rationality assumed the displacement of traditional collectivism with modern individualism and did not provide space for modern collectivism" (6). On the other hand, Marx recognised the significance of modern collectivism in the form of "two antagonistic classes" and their confrontations. However, Oommen says that Marx failed to "account for the collective actions of non-class antagonistic social categories such as race, gender, generation, nationalities and the like". He adds that "when 'post-class' and 'postmodern movements', whether feminist, youth, peace, environmental/ecological or national/ethnic, crystallised in the West, the existing frameworks within sociology could not offer explanations" (Ibid, 6). This is the context in which the theoretical approaches of rational choice theory as well as new social movement (NSMs) were formulated in the West. In this narrative, what I find to be a little problematic is the notion of 'post-class'. What exactly the prefix 'post' indicates is not clear in Oommen's description. One could possibly assume that the

above narrated category of movements can be grouped as 'post-class' movements. However, his take on class is still ambiguous. Is he using 'post'-class without denying class as a significant category or does he believe that the age of class is over are some of the questions that need to be clarified.

One possible answer can be found in Oommen's previous book on social movements titled as *Nation, Civil Society and New Social Movements* (2004), where he argues, by making a distinction between India and the West, that "Old Social Movements (OSMs) of India were largely non-class movements". On the contrary, in the case of the West, it was class movements (247). Further, according to him, "NSMs of India are responses to the discontents of Indian modernity, the major sources of which are planned economic development and the failure to implement the constitutional promise of equality and social justice" (Ibid). This argument implied two issues: firstly, the theoretical basis of this characterisation between 'old' and 'new' does not have much validity in the Indian context; secondly, the characterisation itself is misleading and wrong. If we try to elaborate these two issues, then one could see that, whether it is old or new, most of the movements were directly or indirectly engaged with modernity as a socio-political condition. Hence, I argue that modernity as an axis on which Oommen attempts to make the distinction between 'old' and 'new' does not have any empirical and theoretical validity in Indian context. Secondly, his over generalisation that all old movements are non-class movements in Indian context contradict with the empirical reality. Any rigorous attempt to study movements can be identified with class and non-class elements. However, in certain cases class is the overriding feature whereas in many other instances non- class categories such as caste or tribe/adivasis plays the principal role in a socially

and politically situated context. In such a context, an exclusive categorisation and generalisation will not provide any conceptual advancement in understanding movement activism and their politics.

Ray and Mary F Katzenstein's (2009), edited work is an important contribution in the area of social movement studies in the recent past. The major claim of this study is that it focuses on how "social movements as actors who may buffer, accelerate, ameliorate and challenge the shifting agendas of the state" (4). While focusing on state, they often studied the repulsion of the Nehruvian state and the ways in which it failed to keep its promises. All the essays collected in this book attempts to look at social movement politics in India in connection with the shifts happening over/around the state in India in the post independence period. Hence, Ray and Katzenstein argue that social movement activism has always been shaped in response to a "master frame" since independence. They delineate the meaning of master frame as "broad categories that allow for multiple interpretation; they thus malleable by interpretation as well as by change. Indeed, they may be transformed in times of crisis or may evolve over time" (11). Consequently, they suggested a historical periodisation corresponding to different master frames and categorized the essays published in this volume in relation to the movements located in the three important historical phases: 1947-1966; 1967-1988 and 1989-to the present. Each historical phase has constituted a master frame of the state and the social movement activism is perceived in these studies as a response to the shifting master frame of the state. According to this approach, the master frame of the first historical phase (1947-1966) was *democratic socialism or Nehruvian Social Democracy* (emphasis is mine). Further, they elaborate that it refers to "the intersection of the massive mobilisation of the

nationalist movement under Gandhi's leadership with Nehru's very different visionary commitment to democratic socialism following Independence set the terms of movement politics from the earliest days of post-1947 politics" (7). In the second master frame, the period 1967-1988 constitutes as *de-institutionalization*. It indicates the diminishing significance of the Congress-dominated state, their institutions and policies along with the weakening of Nehruvian idealism of social democracy. This is situated as a transitional phase and social movements emerged in this period approached, the authors observed, this as "...an opportunity and reason to seek the full capture of state power" (17). Master frame in the third phase (1980s-to the present) is mainly constituted by twin ideologies which are *market* and *religious nationalism*.

I endorse the views of the authors regarding the ascendancy of religious nationalism and the movements and organisations articulated to press their communal agenda further. Similarly, their observation on the emergence of movements which attempted to resist the marketisation and liberalization policies since 1980s (the historical phase of third master frame) is well taken. However, this reading has a major limitation. It overlooked the identity based regional movements often, not primarily, shaped in response to a master frame above discussed in the post 1990s. Adivasi movements, including AGMS which I have chosen for this study, similar movements emerged in different parts of the country, are a concrete example of this. Indeed, they might have responded to Hindu nationalism or the dominance of market nonetheless, their prime focus was the question of survival and subsistence and broadly issue of equality and social justice which resulted through historically oppressive structures and processes. I don't think the authors are unaware about this aspect although they located the movements based on identity (dalits, women,

environmental etc) in the second historical phase of 'de-institutionalization'. Perhaps, one could see that many movements<sup>22</sup> originated in the second phase have extended over to the third phase with minor modification in their claims, objectives and strategies.

Another issue which I found in their introduction is the strict and neat compartmentalization between civil society actors and social movement actors.

According to Ray and Katzenstein:

Even as state has failed to keep its promises to the poor and the left parties' influence has been relegated to specific regional locales, scholars have increasingly looked to organized civil society as a possible force which can articulate the interests of the poor. But if we are focus on civil society actors as potential agents in this transformation, then, we need to put social movements back into the story. This is particularly the case in India where social movements have been such a long-standing force (3).

I think this division between civil society actors and social movement actors is a little problematic. Often, in concrete material reality one could see that this is an overlapping domain.

Through this anthology, the authors certainly examine Indian politics and society from the vantage point of collective actors. Those collective actors include political parties, mass organisations, labour unions, non-governmental groups and social movements. In this larger context, the central questions explored in this volume can be described as:

What role have social movements played thus far in the amelioration of poverty, in addressing the needs of its poorest constituents? What has shaped their responses to these issues, and what shifts in focus, discourses or strategy, in this era of marketisation and nationalism, have they been able to adopt? (10)

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<sup>22</sup> For instance, Chipko Movement, Kerala Sasthra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP), Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), Civil Liberties Organisation, to name only a few.

Following this, a crucial question arises in the context of movement analysis is that how shall we measure a movement. According to the authors, a movement is always measured in the Indian context in terms of how far they are accountable to the norm of social justice. They talk about the consensus among both activist and scholars in this regard and they all believe in a certain notion of “progressive politics.” For them, “a social movement must serve the foundational imperatives of ameliorating the ravages of poverty and inequality” (11-12). Indeed, all the essays in this volume, ranging from labour unions to women and environment movements through NGOs, cover a wide spectrum of movement politics since the post independence period and more importantly, all of them discuss the state-society relations and their shifting nature in the context of movement politics in India.

It is worth noting here about a recent study done by Dhanagare (2016) on farmers’ movement in Maharashtra. In this study, Dhanagare made a momentous attempt to look at the life history of *Shetkari Sanghatana*, a prominent farmers’ movement, the way it emerged, developed and institutionalised in Western India during the period spanning from early 1980s to 2014. He considers this as an ongoing movement though it does not have a significant presence in Maharashtra today. *Shetkari Sanghatana* was a farmers’ movement widely attracted the attention of scholars and subjected for some studies earlier (see for instance, Nadkarni 1987; Lennenberg 1988; Omvedt 1991; Lindberg 1994)<sup>23</sup> whereas, Dhanagare’s present study is a comprehensive mapping of the movement. In this study, he is going beyond the traditional Marxist approach of class

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<sup>23</sup> I omitted Dhanagare’s earlier essays on *Shetkari Sanghatana* since those essays were included in the present study we are discussing in a substantially revised form.

analysis to examine the farmers' movement though this is not an endeavour to reject the Marxian framework altogether. Rather, he attempted to complement the Marxian framework by proposing another conceptual framework that he termed as 'populism.' The idea of populism and the characterisation of movements as 'populist movements' is not a new thing in social sciences and particularly in social movement studies. However, Dhanagare's study sets apart the difference because he attributed new meanings to the concept of populism by following Laclau's recent work (2005) on populism. This work substantially reformulated the idea of populism in general and his own earlier work on the same theme. According to Dhanagare, populist politics is different from class politics because the latter is operating through political parties and organisations. Thus, populism as an ideology is often employed to qualify the non-class based organisations or multi-class coalitions with mass support. For Laclau (2005), in Dhanagare's view, populism is conceived "more as an ideology rather than as a rhetoric that is typical of Third World ideologies, echoing the voice of the impoverished subaltern periphery of a modern industrial system, more as a reaction to industrialism, but not anti-industrialism" (2016, 25). In the light of this theoretical insight, Dhanagare believes that this is very much true in the case of Shetkari Sanghatana. In his view, a populist mobilisation is a composite of "multiple ideological discourses" which often articulated through a simple but tremendously attractive slogan. Thus he observes that this is greatly evident in the case of farmers' movement in Maharashtra during 1980s and 1990s. In short, the main emphasis of this study is to recognise and understand Shetkari Sanghatana as a populist movement by invoking 'populism' as a largely revised analytical framework and political ideology.



According to Dhanagare, Shetkari Sanghatana's economistic ideology relied more on Rosa Luxemburg's view on capitalistic mode of production than on Marx and Lenin. Consequently, he presented that this farmers' movement's ideology implied two important characters which are "totality and facility" (87). In which totality refers to the "total commitment to a given cause, a principle or the desired end state in which compromise is treason" (Ibid). Further, the second feature that is facility which indicates "holders of an ideology constitute a continuous segment of that totality of *gestalt*, which has also a doctrine-less, pragmatic non-ideological part built into itself" (Ibid). Along these lines, in Dhanagare's view, this movement's ideology is combined "economism with populism." The study concludes with explaining multiple reasons which led to the decline of the movement in Maharashtra. According to the author, this decline can be located intrinsic to any sort of populist ideology and the current status of Shetkari Sanghatana is symptomatic of that.

### **Studies on Tribal/Adivasi Movements in India: An Overview**

Tribal/Adivasi movements have a long history in India although systematic and theoretically rigorous studies have been undertaken since 1980s particularly in the terrain of social anthropology. Undoubtedly, one could acknowledge the contribution of K S Singh both as an administrator as well as a scholar. *Tribal Movements in India* (volume I and II) under his editorship published in the year 1982 and 1983 still remains as the first substantial effort to survey the tribal/adivasi movements across India in the postcolonial period. The first volume of this work is completely dedicated to studies on North-East India and the second volume focuses on the rest of India. Since then, numerous studies

have been published and a great number of them were case studies from different regions of India.

In the introduction to the first volume of *Tribal Movements in India*, Singh (1982) states that their documents on various tribal movements in different parts of the country can be organised around a typology as given below:

- Origin of the movement and factors contributing to it;
- Goal of the movement and its programme;
- Life-cycle and development of the movement – a historical narrative and a chronology of events;
- Role and nature of the dominant groups and interaction of group, community and factional interests;
- Character of the movement in terms of its political, social, reformatory and cultural programmes;
- Geography of the movement;
- Concept of insiders and outsiders;
- Leadership of the movement;
- Participation in election and political process at the local, regional and national level;
- Support of the movement by forces from outside and within;
- The present status of the movement and causes of its survival or decline; Impact of the movement;
- Folklores of the movement;
- Emergence of multi tribe regional systems and
- Bibliography of the movement (IX).

The essays collected in two volumes attempt to map and examine one or more aspects of the tribal movements that are illustrated above. S M Dubey discusses the long history of various efforts and movements against the British in the North-East India in one of the essays in volume one. According to him, the movements in this region can be categorized into four: 1) religious and social reform movements; 2) movements for separate statehood; 3) insurgent movements and 4) movements for assertions of cultural rights

(1982, 11-12). It should be noted here that there are only two studies – P K Misra (1977) and P R G Mathur (1977) – on the mobilisations of tribals in South India. Most of the essays collected in these two volumes are empirical descriptive accounts. The two volumes did not move towards a conceptual and theoretical discussion on the themes such as autonomy, political economy of tribal life and the question of cultural and political identity of adivasis in India.

Another noted scholar in the area of tribal movement studies was David Hardiman though he mainly concentrated on tribal uprisings in the colonial period (1984; 1987 and 2006). The first essay is on Devi movement which emerged and transformed from a religious movement to a tribal assertion in Surat district under the Bombay presidency in the period 1922-23. This essay was first published in subaltern studies volume III (1984) and later included in his work titled *Histories for the Subordinated* (2006). Both these works developed into a historical perspective although it significantly deviated from the earlier anthropological accounts of tribal society in India. Hardiman, one of the founding members of subaltern studies project, in a similar vein to Ranajit Guha, presupposed and reinvented the agency of adivasis in these studies by largely sharing the framework of subaltern studies. Indeed, conceptually and theoretically this registers a clear departure from the earlier works on adivasi movements in India. Thus, he suggests the need to “...emphasise the fact that Subaltern Studies focuses on the relationship between elite and subaltern as a historical process ...the bonds between the dominant and subordinate are always strong, and often mirror each other...Their relationship is being ever modified through an ongoing process of mutual dialogue” (2006, 20-21).

Here, adivasis as a community is broadly located as one of the important constituents of subaltern class in India. It is also worth mentioning here his theoretical approach towards community studies. He is not merely looking at communities from a sympathetic point of view but also making necessary critique when attempting to understand their history. In his view, “it does them no service, if we inflate their virtues and ignore their blemishes” (2006, 02). This is a very valid point as far as adivasi community/adivasi movement studies are concerned. Often, studies are undertaken to merely valorize the community and scholars completely overlooked the significance of critical reading in academic studies. According to him, even though with a good intention, a mere valorization is only a myth making and not a historical investigation. By this way, he adopted a very balanced approach in understanding the communities and particularly adivasis in Western India.

Similarly, as part of subaltern studies project, Tanika Sarkar (1985) studied Santal tribal protest occurred during the period 1924-1932 in Malda, north-Western Bengal. She explored the politics of Jitu (Jitu Chotka and Jitu Santal), who were the leaders of this movement. In this study, she found that it was basically an expression of tribal autonomy. However, it was constituted through different dimensions such as a resistance against colonial administration and their land policies on the one hand and a movement against local Hindu landholders on the other. They adopted the modality to reject Santalhood seeking a Hindu status, however, according to Sarkar, it was a complicated process which entailed a lot of ambiguities. In this context, she observes that “indeed, the urge to overcome the limitations of a purely Santal identity does not seem to have weakened the urge for Santal power” (153). By largely following the framework and historiography of subaltern studies, she examines the subaltern consciousness, culture and, broadly, their

agency. Along with this enquiry, she recognises the significance of understanding internal hierarchy and stratifications as well as the power dynamics within the subaltern groups.

1990s witnessed a major intellectual shift in the study of adivasi life and culture in general and particularly on adivasis/indigenous movements in India. The concept of tribe, tribal identity, ethnicity, indigeneity, and tribal autonomy has been subjected for serious critical scrutiny and inquiry in the sociological and anthropological studies during this period. The emergence of adivasi (mainly in the context of India) and indigenous movements (globally) played a decisive role in revisiting and re-conceptualising the traditionally accepted and entrenched conceptual categories and paradigms. As part of it, the colonial and Eurocentric epistemological contours of previous anthropological studies have been taken up for meticulous critical reading in the light of new theoretical advancements in the domain of sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, gender studies, political ecology and environmental history. This can be seen at various levels and degrees in the works of Skaria (1999); Baviskar (2011); Karlsson (2000); Rycroft and Sangeeta Dasgupta (2011); Rycroft (2011); Sundar (1997); Banerjee (2006); Guha (1991, 1999); Gadgil and Guha (1992); Dube (1997); and Xaxa (1999). Here, a few themes related to Adivasi insurgency, resistance and social movements have been discussed below.

It is an undeniable fact that for three or four decades since 1970s Indian society confronted the occurrence of various categories of social movements. Many of them were responses, reactions and protests against the catastrophic implications of hegemonic capitalistic development mainly instigated by the state on the life and culture of the

marginalized sections in the society. Amongst those struggles or protests, the movement against Sardar Sarovar dam project acquired wide scholarly attention. There are many studies but the widely acclaimed and referred one is Amita Baviskar's anthropological study of this movement. The sub-theme of her book, *In the Belly of the River* (2011) obviously refers that it deals with tribal communities' conflicts over development. The author primarily conceived this as an environmental movement, however, tribals / adivasis (mainly Bhilala tribes) were one of the main constituents of the movement against Sardar Sarovar dam project. Unlike many other studies on social movements, it began with a discussion on the deeper issues like the epistemology of the knowledge produced through the research, the ideology of the researcher in that process, the subjective position of the people who are being researched and finally, how these constitute the outcome of the research. In short, the researcher problematised the positivistic tradition of research and explicated the theoretical position and methodological strategies adopted to carry out this study. Hence, she indubitably writes:

Theories as well as the methodologies by which they are applied, authenticated and changed are all shaped by the ideology of the researcher. If we recognise that knowledge is socially constituted, historically situated, and informed by conflicting values, we are compelled to acknowledge that research cannot be the search and discovery of a single universal 'truth' (2011, 2).

By following this, the researcher clarifies her position on adivasis communities. She says how adivasis have been conceived by the state is not a subject matter of her enquiry instead, the ways in which adivasis consider the state is the focus of her investigation. Therefore, it locates itself in a bottom-up perspective that can be "seen as a corrective to the surfeit of accounts that uncritically accept the state's representation of adivasis" (3). It doesn't mean that the researcher is taking the experience of the people for granted, rather,

she examines the experience and culture of the people from the perspective of a critical tradition. Therefore, Baviskar questions the notion of an inherent conservationist ethic shared by tribals and other forest dwellers. This theoretical position informed through her empirical field work in fact helped the movement studies in general and adivasis movement studies in particular to push further to a more advanced stage.

Another novel and original theoretical move initiated in the book is an attempt to go beyond a complete reliance on development/resistance binary as an analytic framework for understanding people's movements and collective actions. Therefore, she writes, "the three levels of politics – local, Sangath, and Andolan – together show the possibilities as well as limitations in the ways in which the collective action of hill adivasis fit into a structure of development and resistance" (234). This theoretical position, in Baviskar's view, would help to unleash the multi-dimensional politics in which adivasis have been engaged for some years. In this regard, she tries to unravel the complexity of this multi-dimensionality entangled in the discourse on environment, development, ecological sustainability, adivasi's perception of what they are fighting for and the question of social justice. In the backdrop of this discussion, she makes a striking observation that "although the ideology that perceives environmental conflict in terms of sustainability is external to adivasi consciousness, it is employed strategically by the movement in the valley to gain the sympathy of urban supporters" (237). This can be seen as an effort to un-romanticise the life and culture of adivasis and demonstrating their struggle primarily for survival and subsistence. Baviskar differentiates the views of adivasis and others, mainly environmental activists, regarding nature, state and development and how this has been configured in the movement against Sardar Sarovar dam project.

Further, it raises another complicated question that how adivasis have been represented in the discourse on development and resistance. Certainly, this representation entailed a sort of appropriation through which environmentalists attempted to link local struggles to a global context. Baviskar admits the significance of such strategic appropriation whereas; she systematically problematises the negative implication of such appropriation. According to her,

However the noble the cause, appropriation leads to the mediation of the adivasis consciousness by that of the scholar. The discourse of the general theory of development does not allow people to speak for themselves; it tends to be deaf to people's own understanding of their predicament (241).

For that reason, she was against any attempt to simply grapple and absorb adivasi struggle into an anti-development agenda. Simultaneously, she believes that such absorption overlooks the history of the people who “have always fought against outside oppression, on their terms. Their history of resistance long precedes the advent of development” (241).

Rycroft and Dasgupta (2011), made another momentous effort in the contemporary context in dealing with the conceptual and theoretical issues about adivasi life, culture, identity and, broadly, their politics and resistance. The notable and influential contribution of this work is the attempt to propose a new interdisciplinary field or paradigm termed as *Adivasi Studies* which demarcates a perspicuous distinction from three domains: tribal studies, subaltern studies (both are in the context of India) and indigenous studies (globally). In order to provide a thicker intellectual content to the emerging paradigm of adivasi studies, they begin by offering a conceptual meaning to the term *Adivasi*. Here, it is worth noting how the concept of adivasi differs from the notion



of tribe. They write: “the concept of Adivasi, in contrast, implies a range of historically defined, contested and mediated indigeneities, which cannot be apprehended through the reified notion of ‘tribe’” (1). Undoubtedly, one could say that this determined attempt to define and conceptualise the term adivasi offers great theoretical advancement in this area of adivasi studies. However, they realise the fact that the concept ‘Adivasi’ “has gained widespread resonance and currency in contemporary India” but at the same time “it has yet to supersede the concept of the ‘tribe’ in national arenas” (7). This edited volume is divided into five parts: 1) contesting categories and blurring boundaries, 2) revisiting resistance, 3) landscape and adivasi agency, 4) politics, participation and recognition and 5) mainstreams and margins.

The second part of this book is devoted to the history of adivasi resistance which entails two essays written by Tanika Sarkar and Asoka Kumar Sen. Both the essays engage with the insurgent past of the adivasis during the colonial period which they revisit, reexamine and also reinterpret by using recently developed conceptual apparatus and theoretical insights. Although it does not have any reference to contemporary adivasi movements, it offers more advanced theoretical insights to approach contemporary adivasi movements and resistances. In a brief introduction, the editors draw our attention to the connection between history – which constitutes anti-colonial resistance and colonial counter insurgency – and the present, associated with identity formations, self-identifications and the construction of “adivasi subjectivity”. In this context, their prime concern is to set up a research agenda which deals with the question “how then might an Adivasi-oriented historiography engage with the parameters of resistance as reproduced through Tribal studies and inclusive/corrective approaches to ‘minority histories’” (59). Thus, they

attempted to define the terrain of adivasi studies by reconceptualising adivasi resistance through a discourse within and among ‘tribal’ historiography, subaltern historiography and subaltern citizenship.

In an interesting turn, Tanika Sarkar in the present essay revisits her own work on Jitu Santal’s movement in West Bengal which was published as part of subaltern studies project in 1985.<sup>24</sup> Now she focuses on the implications and change facilitated by Jitu’s movements in the realm of politics, social and culture within this adivasi community. In the reformulated argument, different from the previous essay, Sarkar suggests a new notion on Santal identity and selfhood. In her opinion, this is a “new Santal identity” constructed through the efforts of the movement which had “... departed significantly and deliberately from the ways of their ancestors” (66). This identity construction has been actuated through dual pattern which she termed as “rejection-cum-retention” from various sources that she finds as an indication of a new “selfhood”. This rereading, in her analysis, has diverged significantly from the earlier reading which conceived (as part of the Subaltern Studies project) Santal identity as an “... appropriation of external influences through an internal and inherited grid of meanings”. In a broader sense, she perceived this combination as a demonstration of “radical modernity” and its “discontinuity” in modern identity construction (Ibid). In this context, this process of identity constriction and “self-fashioning”, in her view, is not much “different from the reforms that the modern middle class Indians initiated” (79). In another essay of the book, Asoka Kumar Sen revisits the tribal participation in the great rebellion of 1857-8 in the geographic location of Singhbhum in Jharkhand. He critically examines the previous

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<sup>24</sup> I have discussed about this essay in this chapter, see P. 30.

narratives in this regard and unravels the inadequacy of those sources – official correspondence and administrative reports and also ethnographic data – which was based on constructing those narratives. According to him, these narratives represented by colonial, national, subaltern and Jharkhandi historiographies respectively failed to recognise and address “the strength of tribal participation and leadership” and how this helped to transform “it from a sepoy mutiny and zamindar-led rebellion into a wider rebellion of the Adivasis of Singhbhum” (93). Alternatively, his reconstruction is based on two other sources which are: “testimonial memory” and “*khuntkatti* memory” (83, emphasis in original). In the light of analysing the data collected from these alternate sources, Sen argues that firstly “...the event was not a mere sepoy or zamindar-dominated rebellion. Secondly, it was tribal-led in the region and can be considered as a rebellion of the indigenes. Thirdly, it was an upsurge where tribals and non-tribals combined against the British Raj” (92). Broadly, this effort is not merely to reconstruct the participation of adivasis in the rebellion, but by which it also attempts to develop a new adivasi historiography.

### **Conclusion: Interface between Adivasi Studies and Postcolonial Political Sociology**

Let me summarise the major points and trends concerned with social movement studies in India since 1960s. Social movement studies in India during the 1960s have shown that political scientists dominated over sociologists in the terrain of social movement studies and they looked at politics and political change largely confining to state and government. On the contrary, sociologists and social anthropologists mainly contributed to the domain of social movement studies in the 1970s, though, a large section of them used traditional Marxian framework to understand social movements. Nonetheless, we

cannot find any major difference in terms of their (in the case of both political scientists and sociologists) perception towards politics and political change. Sociologists and social anthropologists in the 1970s mainly focused on peasant movements and conceived them as class struggles by locating them in a traditional Marxian framework. In addition to this, it could be argued that most of their explorations concerned to social movements were theoretically grounded on the modern/tradition binary. At the same time one could also notice that there were some minor efforts to study urban social movements in this period.

In the 1980s, the most important aspect is the emergence of social movement studies as a subfield of sociology. During this period the studies were largely informed by the two theoretical traditions: structural functionalism and Marxism. The historians and political scientists contributed significantly than sociologists in the study of social movements. In this context, it is worth noting that sociologists mainly focused on contemporary social movements and largely overlooked the contribution of subaltern studies – though their approach is historical – in the study of social movements. But, now we could observe that the initial phase of subaltern studies mostly published in the 1980s is the most important and influential contribution in the terrain of methodological as well as theoretical inquiry about peasant and adivasi movements.

1990s witnessed the emergence of different types or categories of movements such as dalit, environmental, women, tribal/adivasi, religious and Hindu nationalist movements in India. These exceptional circumstances provoked both empirical and theoretical challenges to social sciences in general and sociology in particular towards conceptualising these protests and social movements. However, many of them attempted

to conceptualise these movements by using old social movement framework but they had serious limitations to capture the idiosyncrasy of these movements. At the same time, there were some painstaking efforts which attempted to look at the connection between labour and social hierarchy and its various dimensions in connection with dalit movements (Robb, 1993) and the genesis and history of Ambedkar movements in colonial India (Omvedt, 1993a). In this study, Omvedt's inquiry is mainly informed by a Marxian framework but later on she slowly moved to a new social movement framework (Omvedt, 1993b). Omvedt was the pioneering scholar who termed and described the above mentioned category of movements as new social movements in the early 1990s. However, several studies appeared in the latter half of 1990s which questioned the validity of new social movement framework in understanding the various types of movements. As part of it, an attempt has been taken to redefine and renew Marxist framework by way of going beyond the constraints of traditional Marxian framework in understanding social movements. Moreover, these studies aimed to integrate class politics with caste and identity politics, although these efforts also had its own limitations.

In the recent movement studies, efforts have been made to address the conceptual and theoretical issues pertaining to the analysis of social movements in India. The crux of the debate centred around the characterisation of 'old' and 'new' social movements without examining the deeper questions in reference to cultural, social and political claims of the movements. Given this, I argue that any attempt to study movements in terms of class and non-class politics has its own limitations. Any sweeping generalisation will contribute very little to conceptual advancement within social movement framework.

It should be noted here that there were some significant studies that highlighted the shifts happening over/around the state in India in the post independence period. However, their understanding of state, society and politics needs to be revised by referring to the complex and multidimensional operating mechanism of the state and how it affects the everydayness of society and politics. Similarly, it could be argued that the distinction between realm of political and politics has not been attempted. Given this, an attempt is made below to explain the interface between adivasi studies and postcolonial political sociology.

The contour of a postcolonial political sociology has already been explained in the introduction chapter. Let me turn to adivasi studies with an emphasis on interdisciplinary approach. The first concern, this interaction poses is that what constitutes social and political – without situating them as mutually exterior spheres – in the context of adivasi life and assertions in the contemporary context. Indeed, the social of adivasis constituted through the elements of subordination, exploitation and resistance is termed as marginality. Thus, it involves multiple processes such as experiencing the subordination and exploitation, conceiving the meaning of that element of marginality through adivasi assertions and movements and finally how resistance emerges against the oppressive condition. In addition to this, the question of autonomy, political economy of adivasi life and broadly the question of identity makes the terrain of social and political more convoluted. This situation has been subjected to constant reappraising and reinvigorating driven by the new and contemporary assertions of adivasis.

Another important theme in this interface is the notion on adivasi agency. The construction of adivasi agency as a result of the adivasi movements undoubtedly

problematizes the Western liberal enlightenment tradition of rational and autonomous human subject and an affective human agency. Consequently, adivasi human agency has been located in connection with adivasi communities. Therefore, by drawing insights from the emerging adivasi studies, a postcolonial political sociology of adivasis is reconstructed as a framework to analyse contemporary adivasi question. In addition to this, adivasi as an empirical as well as a theoretical entity is evolving when one critically analyses their engagement with modernity. Here, they adopt a “rejection cum retention” modality in order to engage with modernity.

## Chapter 4

### **Marginality of the Adivasis and ‘Kerala Model of Development’: A Historical Overview**

Kerala state is perceived in both popular and policy imagination as the most developed state in India. This perception is represented in academic discourse as *Kerala model of development*. The main purpose of this chapter is to discuss the present condition of adivasis in relation to ‘Kerala model of development.’ Before turning to the purpose, an attempt has been made to present a historical overview of the marginality of adivasis in Kerala since the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, the larger purpose of this chapter is to provide a historical background and socio-political context to the emergence of adivasi assertions as contemporary social movements in Kerala in the post 1990. This historical overview will help in analysing the themes such as adivasi land question, the culture and identity of adivasis, conflict over the control of natural resources, their community life and broadly the imaginations of development in the trajectory of these movements which will be discussed in the subsequent chapters.

A close scrutiny of the movement in the present context of marginality is possible only by looking at the marginality of adivasis in a historical manner since the colonial period. I would look at various historical processes which constitute the continuing marginality of adivasis in relation to the larger discourses of modernity and development in Kerala. Hence, this chapter focuses on how adivasis had been considered and treated in various historical phases since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Kerala.



The chapter is presented in three sections. Section one illustrates the current socio-economic characteristic features and conditions of the adivasis in various districts of Kerala. This section relies on the quantitative data from various sources, which includes census report, 2011; baseline survey of adivasis in Kerala, 2008, jointly produced by the scheduled tribe development department and local self government department; and the research study reports of KIRTADS (Kerala Institute for Research, Training and Development of Scheduled Castes and Tribes). Although, these reports contain many internal contradictions, factual errors and inaccuracy, it helps us to capture a panoptic picture about the adivasi communities in Kerala. Second section of this chapter traces the history of land alienation since colonial period. An historical overview of land alienation is imperative in order to understand the significance of adivasi land question in the present juncture and also how the meaning of the land has changed in various historical phases.

Third section will deal with the way adivasis have been impoverished in Kerala after the formation of the state in 1956. The period from 1950s to the first half of 1980s has been considered as a period of the formation and evolution of a distinct development model and trajectory in Kerala. Scholars like Patrick Heller argues that Kerala marked a distinct trajectory of “social-democratic development” constituted mainly through twin factors of long history of subaltern “class based mobilisations and redistributive social policies” (2009, 79). Similarly, Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen have attempted to explore the relationship between public action and development in their work, *Hunger and Public Action* (1989). According to them, public action played a decisive role in making a pro-people developmental and welfare state in Kerala. Certainly, these two observations

evoke some important questions about the relationship among welfare state, development and caste/adivasi identity of the people. In the first case, it is pertinent to ask the following question of who are the main social actors constituted in this subaltern class and their caste/adivasi/gender identity. And also, why adivasis and dalits didn't gain much from these redistributive social policies compared to other communities? These crucial questions were not explored by Heller's (and many others) presentation about the impressive picture of Kerala model of development. Similarly, Dreze and Sen never explored the questions of who constitutes this public and where is the position of adivasis and dalits in their general categorization of 'public'. In this backdrop, this section outlines migration and the history of development and its implications on adivasis in Kerala by situating it in a larger national context. In brief, this section examines how the state policies in terms of forest conservation, protection of wilderness and modern notions of development resulted in a devastating effect on the social and political life of adivasis. Further, this will help to unravel the connection between the historical route of development and its connection with the construction and reproduction of marginality of adivasi communities in Kerala since 1950 to the present.

### **Socio-economic Features and Conditions of Adivasis in Kerala**

Reviews of the government reports indicate that adivasis are the most vulnerable sections of the society in Kerala in relation to their socio-economic and political conditions. This vulnerability constitutes one of the bases for defining 'marginality' in the present study. The present study conceives marginality in its specific empirical context of adivasis as not merely a visible and apparent absence of material infrastructure and other essential amenities but as a historically constituted, power laden, complex socio-economic and

political condition with many underlying layers. Hence, it is very evident that marginality primarily resulted in large sections of adivasi communities in Kerala society when they eschewed from equal access to land and other natural resources. Consequently, they have been excluded from their 'life-world'<sup>25</sup> and productive resources. Marginality has dual dimensions in which one is caused by the way of a long hegemonic historical process and injustice and the other dimension is related to the devastating implications of socio-economic and political policies adopted by the state since 1990s. Consequently, marginality compels them to become poor, it aggravated their deprivation and misery, encouraged discrimination against them and eventually it threatened all kinds of security in their life. Marginality is also a political condition which means that it restrains the whole community to attain political power, they have become incapable of participating in developmental process and it also denied the opportunity to participate in the policy making.

### ***Adivasi Population in Kerala***

In 2008, department of Local Self Government in Kerala along with Scheduled Tribe Development Department and Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA)<sup>26</sup> jointly carried out a base line survey of adivasis in Kerala. A report which was published in 2011 based on this survey illustrates the socio-economic conditions of adivasis in Kerala. As part of it, the survey presents the status of the community with regard to the ownership over land, sources of income, occupational status and livelihood measures of the adivasi

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<sup>25</sup> Here I use the term, life-world in a phenomenological sense.

<sup>26</sup> KILA is an institute supported by the Government of Kerala and it is a nodal institution for training, research and consultancy for the Local Self-Government Institutions.

population in Kerala. All these statistics begin with the numerical position of the adivasis in Kerala. Numerically adivasis are a minority when compared to other communities and caste groups in the Kerala society. As per this survey, the total adivasi population in Kerala was 4, 01,401, whereas according to the 2011 census of India, the total number of adivasi population in Kerala is 4, 84, 839. Adivasis constitute only 1.5 percent to the total population of Kerala. Among these population, most of them (89.33%) are inhabited in rural areas and only (10.67%) are living in urban areas. It is evident from a simple comparison of survey and census results that there is an increase of 20. 79 percent of adivasis in Kerala from 2008 to 2011. This is a huge leap in terms of population growth when it is compared with the larger trend in terms of population growth in Kerala. A more careful examination of this trend indicates that the real reason for this population growth is not an increase in the existing population. Instead, it has happened mainly as a result of the inclusion of more communities into the categories of scheduled tribe. The following table illustrates district wise population of adivasis in Kerala.

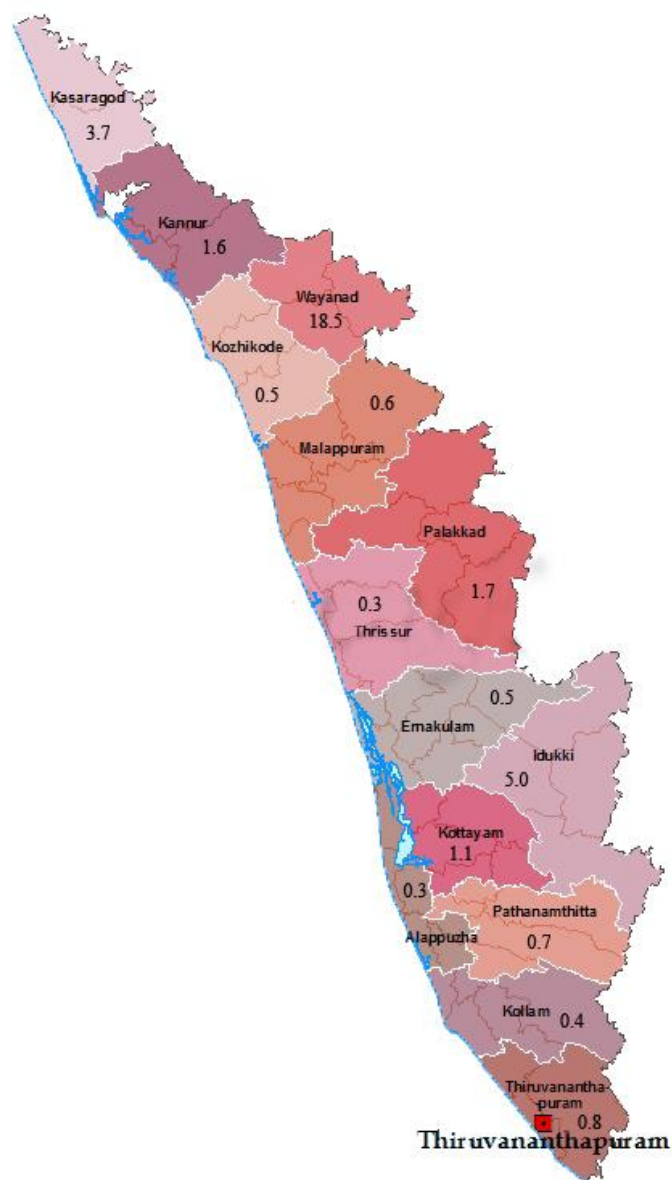
**Table 4.1: District wise Scheduled Tribes Population in Kerala**

State/District Code	State/District	Scheduled Tribes Population		
		Total	Rural	Urban
32	Kerala	4, 84, 839 (1.5)	4, 33, 092 (2.5)	51, 747 (0.3)
01	Kasaragod	48,857 (3.7)	46, 094 (5.8)	2, 763 (0.5)
02	Kannur	41,371 (1.6)	36,302 (4.1)	5,069 (0.3)

03	Wayanad	1, 51, 443 (18.5)	1, 48, 215 (18.9)	3228 (10.2)
04	Kozhikode	15,228 (0.5)	9,555 (0.9)	5,673 (0.3)
05	Malappuram	22,990 (0.6)	18,247 (0.8)	4,743 (0.3)
06	Palakkad	48,972 (1.7)	47,023 (2.2)	1949 (0.3)
07	Thrissur	9,430 (0.3)	5,859 (0.6)	3,571 (0.2)
08	Ernakulam	16,559 (0.5)	8,324 (0.8)	8,235 (0.4)
09	Idukki	55,815 (5.0)	55,243 (5.2)	572 (1.1)
10	Kottayam	21,972 (1.1)	19,698 (1.4)	2,274 (0.4)
11	Alappuzha	6,574 (0.3)	2,961 (0.3)	3,613 (0.3)
12	Pathanamthitta	8,108 (0.7)	7,663 (0.7)	445 (0.3)
13	Kollam	10,761 (0.4)	7,886 (0.5)	2,875 (0.2)
14	Thiruvananthapuram	26,759 (0.8)	20,022 (0.8)	6,737 (0.4)

Source: Census Report 2011

**Figure 4.1: Distribution of Adivasi Population in Various districts of Kerala**



The table (3.1) shows that the highest proportion (18.5%) of adivasis live in Wayanad district and the least proportion (0.3%) of adivasis in Alappuzha district. Idukki district

recorded the second largest adivasis population (5%) in the state. This indicates that adivasis are mostly concentrated in the hilly regions of Wayanad, Idukki, Kasaragod, Palakkad and Thiruvananthapuram districts. In which Wayanad, Idukki and Palakkad account for over 60 percent of the total adivasi population in Kerala.

As per the 2008 survey, out of the 40 Scheduled Tribes notified in the state, *Paniyan* is the most populous tribal community with a population of 92,783 (23.1% of the total tribal population in the state). Kurichiyan, the second largest tribe constitutes 8.95% of the total adivasi population. Six other adivasi community population is recorded the following order: Mavilan (7.76%), Irular (6.61%), Kurumar/Mulla Kuruman (5.23%), Kattunaikan (4.98), Malavettuvan (4.91), and Muthuvan (4.77%). The rest of the adivasi population ranges from 0.01 percent to 3.68 percent.

### ***Literacy and Education Level***

**Table 4.2: Occupational Pattern of Adivasi Families and Individuals**

SL. No.	Main Occupation	Families		Individuals (Above 15 Years)	
		No	Percentage	No	Percentage
1.	Collection of Forest Resources	1662	1.65	4160	1.15
2.	Agriculture	9779	9.69	22727	6.28
3.	Manufacturing of Traditional Products	337	0.33	1220	0.34
4.	Animal Husbandry	747	0.74	4032	1.11

5.	Small Scale Business	175	0.17	286	0.08
6.	Collection of Medicinal Plants	318	0.32	639	0.18
7.	Agricultural Labourers	60,589	60.04	110823	30.62
8.	Wage Labour in Forest Areas	5439	5.39	9816	2.71
9.	Employment Guarantee Programme	2162	2.14	10189	2.82
10.	Non-agriculture Labourers	10,706	10.61	19314	5.34
11.	Estate Labourers	530	0.53	1321	0.37
12.	Government/Semi-government Job	4922	4.88	7096	1.96
13.	Permanent Job in Private Sector	530	0.53	1755	0.48
14.	Permanent Employment in Forest Areas	80	0.08	176	0.05
15.	Permanent Employment in Estate Sector	240	0.24	755	0.21
16.	ST Promoter	0	0	791	0.22
17.	Others	995	0.99	0	0
18.	No Income	1701	1.69	1,66,780	46.09
Total		100912	100	3,61,880	46.09

Source: Basic Information of ST Communities (2008), State Level Tables Prepared by

Department of Local Self Government, ST Development department and KILA



The above table illustrates that most of the adivasis (which means 60.04 percent of the families and 30.62 percent of the individuals above 15 years old) have been working as agricultural workers. Following this, large number of adivasis (10. 61 percent of the families and 5.34 percent of individuals above 15 years old) has been working as non-agricultural wage labourers and a few families and individuals (9.7 and 6.28 percent respectively) are working in their own agriculture fields.

**Table 4.3: Adivasi Land Ownership by Size and Source**

SL. No.	Means by Which Land Obtained	Land Ownership of the Families (in Cents)						
		Below 5	5-9	10-24	25-49	50-99	Above 100	Total
1	Land Settlement by Govt.	2706	1224	1079	600	584	2555	8748
2	Allocated as Joint Agriculture Land	47	46	42	45	45	465	690
3	<i>Micha Bhoomi Pathichu Kittiyathu</i> (Excess Land Allotted)	407	296	602	454	600	1263	3622
4	Forest Land with Ownership Document	439	794	1260	963	1417	3351	8224
5	Forest Land without Ownership Document	451	742	930	610	983	5130	8846
6	Obtained Traditionally	5311	8353	8482	4892	6497	10855	44390

7	Obtained by Themselves	1238	2058	2577	1110	1322	1929	10234
8	<i>Kudikidappu Avakasam Labhichathu</i> (Obtained by Tenancy Rights)	751	669	508	145	200	266	2599
9	Wasteland ( <i>Purambhoku Bhoomi</i> ) <sup>27</sup>	330	206	165	74	55	98	928
10	Land Lord's Land	485	297	293	128	201	297	1701
11	Encroached Land	38	47	164	94	235	918	1496
12	Land Obtained through Rehabilitated Package	99	56	30	16	51	112	364
13	Land Obtained Through Other Means	7725	189	133	47	66	177	8337
14	Others	0	0	0	0	0	0	5090
Total		20027 (19.04)	14977 (14.24)	16265 (15.46)	9178 (8.72)	12256 (11.65)	27416 (26.06)	105209 (100)

Source: Basic Information of ST Communities (2008), State Level Tables Prepared by

Department of Local Self Government, ST Development department and KILA

The above table indicates that 19.4 percent of the adivasi families are holding less than 5 cents of land and 14.24 percent are having land between 5 to 9 cents. Another 15.46

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<sup>27</sup> Land that is desolate, barren or ravaged.

percent are holding land between 10 to 24 cents and 8.72 percent families have land between 25 to 49 cents. According to this statistics, we could observe that around 50 percent of the adivasi families are holding less than 25 cents of land. In this context, let me present the total number of landless families in the following table (4.4) which will provide a more realistic picture about the magnitude of landlessness among adivasi communities in Kerala.

**Table 4.4: Landless, Homeless, House Not Suitable for Residing and Partially Fit Houses**

SL. NO.	Category	Families	Percentage to Total Families
1.	Landless	4614	4. 57
2.	Homeless	8781	8. 70
3.	House not Suitable	31, 648	31. 36
4.	Partially Fit	25, 850	25. 61

Source: Basic Information of ST Communities (2008), State Level Tables Prepared by Department of Local Self Government, ST Development department and KILA

**Table 4.5: Land Possessed by the Families without Ownership Document**

SL. No.	Category	No. of Families	Area of Land Under Use (Acre)
1.	Families who haven't received document so far	8317	14602
2.	Residing in Wildlife Sanctuaries	426	715
3.	Shifting inside the forest	52	19
4.	Encroached in the Forest Land	2939	2271
5.	Residing in Wasteland	1330	335
6.	Possession of Wasteland	1962	1237
7.	Revenue Land Encroached by Adivasis	1037	597
Total		16053	19776

Source: Basic Information of ST Communities (2008), State Level Tables Prepared by Department of Local Self Government, ST Development department and KILA.

The official data indicates that the total number of landless adivasis in Kerala is about 5 percent of the total adivasi families in Kerala (see the Table 4.4). However, by a thorough analysis, one could see that the statistical aggregates illustrated in table number 4.4 contradict with the official data demonstrated in the subsequent table (see Table 4.5) which figures the land possessed by adivasi families without having ownership document. In fact, it poses a more significant question on the context in which one could assume that an adivasi owns the land. In other words, it raises the question of what does

land ownership or land titles mean to them. In simple administrative terms, land ownership enables one to obtain a proper document which is a legal deed or document constituting evidence of right, especially of ownership of property. If we consider this understanding to interpret the data mentioned above in various tables, we could see that apart from the 4,614 families (4.57%), another 16,053 families (see table 4.5) are landless adivasis. Hence, it constitutes 20,667 families out of 100912 adivasi families, i.e. 20.48 percent of the total adivasi families in Kerala. In which, as we have seen, 15.91 percent of families possess the land which is recognised by the community but there is no guarantee assurance that they would be able to obtain the legal ownership of that land in future. Many of these categories i.e. people residing in wildlife sanctuaries, adivasis ‘supposedly’ encroached in the forest land etc. are considered as illegal occupancies by the state in terms of forest rights act, 2006. Thus, one could observe two dispositions in which the first is internal contradictions and ambiguities in the official data in estimating the actual number of landless families in Kerala. Second is about the the apparent contrariness between official data concerned to the landlessness of adivasis and movement’s claim over the number of landless adivasi families. It will be discussed in the next chapter. In this context, it is worth explaining the history of land alienation since colonial period which is discussed below.

### **Appropriation of Adivasi Land in Colonial Kerala**

The themes such as land, forest, agrarian economy, tribal economy, forest dwellers and their relationship with colonialism have been revisited in the academic domain of

environmental history and political ecology in India since mid 1990s.<sup>28</sup> Thus, these readings have provided a new understanding about the past, our history and the ways in which the above mentioned themes were interconnected with the larger socio-political and economic phenomenon vis-a-vis colonialism. Most of these readings accepted the fact that during the colonial era, particularly in the British period, the rulers appropriated forests and agrarian land with an intention to exploit the resources in order to accomplish their commercial and capitalist aspirations. The Kerala state had not been any exception to this larger historical transformation in relation to land, forest and the life of forest dwellers (adivasis).

As we know, Kerala was not a unified entity in the colonial period and it was divided into three different political as well as administrative units which were Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. Travancore and Cochin were two different princely states and the Malabar was a British province in Madras presidency. A devastating impact on land, forest and the life of adivasis had taken place in Kerala, as in many other parts of the country, as a result of the attempts to develop a colonial economy in Kerala. However, the purpose of this section is not to elucidate all the nuances and implications of the development of colonial economy. In fact, this section intends to bring out a historical overview of the major actors involved in the process of land alienation of adivasi communities in Kerala during the 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Adivasi life and culture in the colonial period in Kerala was a subject matter of various studies and most of these studies gave more emphasis to the social and cultural

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<sup>28</sup> A few important works include, Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha (2000); Rangarajan (2001a; 2001b and 2007).

transformation among them. But these studies overlooked to establish a connection between the larger economic and political changes in the society and the socio-cultural transformation of adivasi life.<sup>29</sup> They conceived social and cultural/economic and political – as two separate and mutually exclusive entities. In fact, this implied a colonial administrative strategy and the above mentioned studies provided an epistemological support to it. This underlying colonial epistemological motive had been problematised by Kunjhaman through his academic studies on the evolution, common and diverse characteristics and transformations in the terrain of tribal economy of Kerala during the colonial period (1985, 1989). In his work, he finds the regional specific (Tranvancore, Cochin and Malabar) variations in the ‘economic evolution’ of adivasis in Kerala. According to him, the demographic composition of the adivasi population in the colonial period reveals that a large segment of them inhabited the northern districts of modern Kerala (these districts constituted the former Malabar region) rather than Travancore and Cochin.<sup>30</sup> In Malabar, Wayanad<sup>31</sup> was the district where majority of the adivasi population inhabited. This demographic trend has not been altered much and currently Wayanad district constitutes the highest number of adivasis population in Kerala.<sup>32</sup> When we look at the actors involved in the land alienation of adivasis in colonial period, it is an

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<sup>29</sup> See Thurston (1907, 1909); Krishna Iyer (1909), IV Volumes; Luiz (1962).

<sup>30</sup> Wayanad, Kasargod, Kannur, Kozhikode, Malappuram and Palakkad constitute the northern districts of modern Kerala.

<sup>31</sup> The district Wayanad was formed in 1980 and earlier it was divided into two taluks known as south Wayanad and North Wayanad. These two taluks were part of the Kozhikode and Kannur districts respectively since the colonial period.

<sup>32</sup> See Table no. 3.1 of P. 6 (district wise scheduled tribe population in Kerala) in the section titled as *socio-economic features and conditions of adivasis in Kerala*.

uncontested fact that the British were the prime actors accountable for it. Initially, they had considered timber as an important economic resource since the requirement for timber was very high in those days. Therefore, at the beginning, the encroachment of the British to the forest of adivasis in Kerala was mainly intended to cut the woods and exploit it as valuable economic resource. The competition between the colonial powers led them to seize the forest resources, mainly woods, from India and particularly from Madras presidency. Gadgil and Guha (by citing Edye 1835; Albion 1926) furnished a detailed account of it. They write:

In a period of fierce competition between the colonial powers, Indian teak, the most durable of shipbuilding timbers, saved England during the war with Napoleon and the later maritime expansion. To tap the likely sources of supply, search parties were sent to the teak forests of India's west coast. Ships were built in dockyards in Surat and on the Malabar Coast as well as from teak imported into England (2000, 119).

Another principal reason for the enormous exploitation of woods from Indian forest was the construction and expansion of 'railway network after about 1853'. Subsequently, large chunks of forest land were emptied due to the removal of woods and these forest lands were converted into plantations in which they began the cultivation of cash crops like tea, coffee and cardamom etc (Prakash, 2002). It marks the beginning of agrarian production in a capitalist mode.

The history of Malabar unravels the interventions of *Nattu Rajas* (local chieftains) on adivasi life even before the arrival of British. Kunjhaman traced the history and nature of economic evolution of tribals in Wayanad and Attappady (Palakkad district), two predominant tribal areas in Malabar since 17<sup>th</sup> century. By referring to volume one of William Logan's *Malabar Manual*, he writes, "Till the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Wayanad was inhabited exclusively by the hill-tribes" and at that time, in his view, tribal



society was “isolated and primitive” (Kunjhaman, 1989, 40). The life of adivasis had been influenced first through the intervention of the Raja of Kottayam by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. These interventions ensured “the occasional payment to the Raja in the form of gifts and tributes” (Ibid, 41-50). It discloses the fact that local chieftains can be considered as important actors in the domain of adivasi life even before the colonial period although it did not make any major socio-economic implications on their life.

Unlike the earlier infringements, when Malabar came under the direct control of the British in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, it had created unparalleled overwhelming impacts on the adivasi life, their land relations, economy and culture. In the colonial perspective, forest was a repository of enormous resources for exploitation as in the capitalist notion on natural resources particularly towards forests. This can be perceptibly seen in the description of Rhodes Morgan, district forest officer of Malabar in 1887. According to him, “the deciduous forests contain the most valuable timber trees, such as teak, rosewood, *dyne* (*Artocarpus hirsute*), *venghay* (*Pterocarpus marsupium*), *ven-teak*, (*Lagerstraemia microcarpia*), and a host of others, and produce many valuable articles of commerce, of which wax, honey, resin, turmeric, zedoary and myrobalans are the principal” (Cited in Johny 2008, 139-140). This view was totally contradictory to the native adivasis’ conception of nature and forest in general and trees in particular. Many scholars observed that adivasis had developed a natural economy<sup>33</sup> which was based on a

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<sup>33</sup> Here the term ‘Natural economy’ refers to a type of economy in which money is not used for the transfer of resources among people. It is a system of allocating resources through direct bartering, entitlement by law, or sharing out according to traditional custom. In the more complex forms of natural economy, some goods may act as a referent for fair bartering, but generally currency plays only a small role in allocating resources. As a corollary, the majority of goods produced in a system of natural economy are not produced

reciprocal relationship between them and the nature. This natural economy was largely dismantled as a result of the British encounter. Subsequently, the formation of imperial forest department in 1864 and the enactment of Indian Forest Act, 1865 accelerated the exploitation of the forest resources in a more structured and organized manner. In brief, massive snatching of timber resources, development of plantations, classification of forests into 'reserved' and 'protected' and the forest legislations – to protect the economic aspiration of the British' – dispossessed a large number of adivasis from their forest land and forced the adivasis to move into the interior forests in Malabar. Furthermore, some other sections of adivasis had become the labourers of the British and local land lords.

In the colonial period, although Thiruvithamkoor and Cochin were two princely states in Kerala, the British had significant influence in their political and administrative decision making. Hence, the British succeeded to a large extent in accomplishing their colonial economic aspirations. It is exemplified by the following two important administrative decisions taken by the princely states in 1865 and 1911. In 1865, Thiruvithamkoor government decided to bestow complete right for the tenancy of the land under the possession of princely state on the British. The basic interest of this decision was to encourage plantation crops. Similarly, in 1911, Thiruvithamkoor government declared that they would not issue title deeds for the adivasis even if they had inhabited either in the government forest or reserved forest for a long time. It was also a decision to handover the adivasi inhabited lands for the British planters (Prakash, 2002, 22). Another

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for the purpose of exchanging them, but for direct consumption or subsistence by the producers' ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural\\_economy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_economy)).

instance of the influence of the British on Travancore princely state can be seen in the attempts of Maharaja of Travancore for constructing new rules to regulate the shifting cultivation practiced by the adivasis. This rule states:

The settlements of hillmen ...shall be permanently fixed and they shall not be permitted to shift them from place to place, except temporarily with the special written permission of the Divisional Forest Officer in cases of scarcity of water, outbreak of epidemics, such as small-pox, etc...The hillmen may fell and use any timber (other than of Royal or Reserved trees) and firewood, bamboos, reeds and canes, free of charge, for their bona fide domestic and agricultural purposes, and the last three, viz. bamboos, reeds and canes, may used by them in the manufacture of petty articles for sale ...<sup>34</sup>

The nexus between the British and the rulers of the princely states, in this case, it was Travancore rulers, enforced these types of restrictions on adivasis. However, in the latter phase of the Maha Raja's rule, he had shown a modest empathy towards adivasi life. In this context, a comparison between Malabar and Travancore with respect to administrative measures which protect the customary rights of adivasis reveals that Travancore rulers executed certain measures which were totally absent in the case of Malabar. It should be important to note here that "... the rulers of Travancore had a fairly well-formulated policy towards tribals taking note of their interests, Land ownership in the case of the tribals was purposely made inalienable so that the immigrant plainsmen could not dispossess them. A comprehensive Act was brought out in 1903" (Kunjhaman 1989, 55). Consequently, a large segment of adivasi population in Travancore had become settled agriculturalists long before their corresponding sections of society in

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<sup>34</sup> Revised Rules for Treatment and Management of Hillmen, passed under Clause (e) Section 60 of the Forest Regulation II of 1068, as amended by Regulations IV of 1071 and IX of 1085, with the sanction of Highness the Maha Raja in suspension of those passed on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1903/7<sup>th</sup> Kanni 1079, and published on pages 789 and 790 of the Government Gazette, dated 6<sup>th</sup> October 1903/20<sup>th</sup> Kanni 1079 – Census of India 1931, Travancore, Appendix I on 'The Primitive Tribes'.

Malabar. Thus, the history of adivasi society in Travancore, at the time of British colonialism, marks a dual picture of massive exploitation of forest resources and land of adivasis on the one hand and on the other, there were some minor efforts to protect them also.

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Wayanad had become the locus of great apprehension and conflicts revolved around land. This had been driven mainly by the massive migration of Syrian Christians from central Travancore to Malabar during the period approximately between 1920s and 1970s. The historical grounds which led to migration has been encapsulated as,

Economic peril generated by the great depression of 1930s, the alarming population growth in Travancore especially that of the Christians, availability of land in Malabar for occupation, the economic stress and food scarcity that resulted from the two world wars and oppressive policies of the Travancore state under the Dewan C. P. Ramaswami Iyer towards Christians (Varghese 2008, 4).

Here, migration began as an experimental search for fortune by individuals and in small groups and eventually it had become a massive migratory movement. This movement was at its culmination in the late 60s. Though, socio-economic implication of migration in the landscape of Malabar is far-reaching and multi-dimensional, I would limit its importance to the changes it had produced on the social life and economy of adivasis in Malabar.<sup>35</sup> Predominantly, the negative implication of migration can be outlined at three levels: 1) substantial amount of deforestation, 2) environmental degradation and 3) adivasi land alienation and their displacement. Hence, it is significant to point out that

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<sup>35</sup> To know more about the socio-economic aspects of migration see, Joseph (1988); Zachariah and S. Irudaya Rajan Eds. (1997); Kurup (1995); Joseph (2002) and Varghese (2008).

migration of the people from Travancore to Malabar was the principal reason for the land alienation of adivasis in Wayanad in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

*Wayanad Colonisation Scheme* has to be mentioned as a reason for the land alienation of adivasis. Another substantial migration of people to Wayanad had taken place as part of the *Wayanad Colonisation Scheme*. It was a government project which was launched in 1948 in order to rehabilitate ex-service men who took part in the Second World War, aboriginals and landless civilians. For this project, the government occupied 37, 147 acres of underdeveloped land in the villages of south Wayanad, Sultan Battery, Ambalavayal and Nenmeni in Wayanad. The whole colony was divided into six blocks and each occupant was provided with 5 acres of dry land and 2 acres of wet land and financial support for developing the uncultivated land.<sup>36</sup> As part of it, the ex-servicemen and their families from different parts of Kerala migrated to Wayanad but concurrently, it provided an opportunity for Syrian Christian migrants to encroach the forest and wastelands of Malabar. In brief, adivasis didn't get much benefit from the project and on the contrary, it had opened up a favourable occasion for others to appropriate forest and adivasi land.

### **Marginality of Adivasis, Development and the State in Kerala, 1950s – 1980s**

This section will summatively map the state of affairs of adivasis during the period – approximately from 1950s to 1980s – since the formation of Kerala as a unified state. This section is based on various sources including government reports, scholarly

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<sup>36</sup> For more information about this, see Administration Report of the Colonisation Schemes for the Year 1974-75, Trivandrum: Government of Kerala 1977, 9-11; Varghese (2008, 286); Prakash (2002, 24).

literature and oral narration of the elderly people (substantial data was collected as part of my fieldwork). As per the census in 1961, when the first census took place after the formation of the state, the total tribal population in Kerala was 2, 12,762.<sup>37</sup> Numerically, it was a very small number and it constituted merely 1.26% of the total population of Kerala at that time.<sup>38</sup> Often, the nature of affirmative action initiated by the state reveals that numerical strength is one of the important aspects on which they acted upon. Due to this 'insignificant' numerical strength, the predicaments of adivasis and their land question was not a major concern of the state immediately after the formation of it as a new state in India. As explained in the previous section, migration from Travancore to Malabar in general and particularly to Wayanad continued until the middle of the 1960s. This section emphasises how adivasis have been adversely affected in Kerala and Wayanad in particular in the post state formation period. However, it's an irrefutable fact that migration deeply implicated on adivasi life and the repercussions of migration have been continuing even today on their life and culture.

In this context, it is necessary to have a broader picture of the national context immediately after independence and the conditions of adivasis in India. In the post-colonial period, the nation state's arbitrary decisions and policy making, markedly with respect to development, resulted in deepening the predicaments of adivasis in India. Thus, it is important to point out the three Nehruvian development apparatuses which played a predominant role in displacing adivasis from the forest land were: 1) setting up

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<sup>37</sup> Census of 1961, Special Tables for SC/ST, Kerala, V-VII, Census Commission Office, Thiruvananthapuram.

<sup>38</sup> As per 1961 census the total population of Kerala was 1, 69, 03715.

of wild life sanctuaries and national parks; 2) development projects particularly, hydro-electric and irrigation projects and 3) “Iron and coal mining, steel, copper, mica, aluminium, uranium works as well as manufacture of construction materials” ( Banerjee 2006, 106).

The wild life conservation policy of the state promoted the establishment of large number of wild life sanctuaries and national parks in India. Ramachandra Guha (2003) concisely pointed out this fact. He writes, “when India became independent, in 1947, it had less than half-dozen wildlife reserves; it now has in excess of four hundred parks and sanctuaries, covering over four percent of the country and there are proposals to double this area” (140). The fundamental problem in India in these attempts to conserve the wildlife is the erroneous perception towards nature. The Indian state and administration perceived nature as an independent entity hence they made a division between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’. Similarly, they also constructed the dualities like ‘wilderness’ versus ‘local communities’, ‘western science’ versus ‘local knowledge’ etc.

However, I argue, it is slightly problematic to interpret Nehru’s notion on development and nation building without considering his apprehension on adivasis, their life, culture and development. In fact, Nehru subjectively conceived adivasi life and development in a distinct manner. It exemplifies his forward note to Verrier Elwin’s book, *A Philosophy of NEFA* (1960). He writes:

- 1) People should develop along the lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional arts and culture.
- 2) Tribal rights in land and forests should be respected.
- 3) We should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do the work of administration and development. Some technical personnel from

outside will, no doubt, be needed, especially in the beginning. But we should avoid introducing too many outsiders into tribal territory.

- 4) We should not over-administer these areas or overwhelm them with a multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through, and not in rivalry to, their own social and cultural institutions.
- 5) We should judge results, not by statistics or the amount of money spent, but by the quality of human character that is evolved (Cited in Xaxa 2008, 7).

Now, one could find ample evidences of problematic usages in this enunciation even though, in my view, the general ethos of these observations acknowledges the significance of adivasi community, their life and culture. Later, it was projected as a basic principle of adivasi development but in reality the actual execution of Nehruvian development programmes evicted large number of local communities especially, adivasis from their inhabited spaces and forests for various development projects such as dam construction, mining, wild life conservation etc. On the basis of the above mentioned discussions, I try to identify the intricate nature and contradictory position embedded in Nehru's subjective perspectives on development rather than a total rejection of Nehru's contribution.

In this backdrop, it is also worthwhile to point out the recent attempts to critically revisit Nehru's legacy. *Frontline*, a national magazine in India, recently published a couple of articles as part of an effort to make a critical appraisal of Nehru on his 125<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary.<sup>39</sup> In this volume, Prabhat Patnaik (2014) attempted to perceive Nehru-Mahalanobis economic strategy from a different conceptual framework offered by statistician-economist, Ashok Rudra. Here, Patnaik defends Nehru-Mahalanobis strategy

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<sup>39</sup> See *Frontline*, December 12, 2014.



in the context of the criticism put forward against Nehru by World Bank and neo-liberal economists. He writes:

The Nehru-Mahalanobis strategy did precisely that: while attempting to boost land augmenting investment (such as irrigation), it eschewed any attempt at boosting agro-based exports, which is essentially what an “outward-looking” strategy such as the one advocated by the World bank and the neoliberal economists would have entailed. *The essence of the Nehru-Mahalanobis strategy in my view lies in its attempt to expand the mining and mineral-based industries and to shift the industrial structure away from agriculture and agro-based Industries to mining and mineral-based industries.* The “industrialization” it visualized related primarily to the expansion of this latter group of industries, which made less demand on agricultural land” (20, Italics in original).

Indeed, this argument and interpretation has great significance in an attempt to build a counter economic and development perspective in terms of ‘anti-imperialist and pro-people development strategy’ in an economy like India. At the same time, this has very little value when it is looked at from the vantage point of adivasis, who have been confronting the historical and political injustices and marginalization even after independence. This developmental paradigm failed to notice the interests of the adivasi communities, consequently, it could not formulate a proper policy to protect and safeguard the fundamental rights of this marginalized sections in the society. In this context, by looking at the implications of development planning in India after independence, Indra Munshi succinctly observes:

Ironically, the decades following Independence were the decades of intense development planning in India; they were also the time of marginalization of adivasi communities from mainstream development. The economic agenda of nation-building centered around industrialisation and urbanization. What accompanied this process were building of large dams, large industrial complexes, infrastructure, opening of mines and forests for the market, and over exploitation of natural resources to satisfy the expanding urban and industrial demands. Ironically, the adivasis inhabit most of the rich, natural resource regions, nearly 80 percent of the minerals, 70 percent of the forests and other natural resources. Ninety percent of the coal mines are located in these areas” (2013, 8).

In the light of these critiques of mainstream development discourse, it can be observed that the industrialisation and urbanisation in Kerala, particularly in the adivasi inhabited area during post state formation period had a different trajectory when compared to the other parts of the country. The way things turned out in Kerala was also more or less similar to the national circumstances, which led the marginalization of adivasis. However, the state established small rather than big dams in Kerala. The only difference is that the state has not yet opened up its forests for commercial purposes and markets, and mining in Kerala.

On the other hand, if we look at the scholarly attempts to understand the adivasi issues in the 1940s and 50s, it is analysed within the two frameworks, *isolation* and *assimilation*. Many scholars in the area of tribal studies explored this theme and according to them (See for example, Singh 1982; Xaxa 2008; Oommen 2011; Akhup 2013), the debate around the themes ‘isolation’ and ‘assimilation’ has a longer history even before independence. In fact, the debate started between Verrier Elwin, an English anthropologist and ethnologist based in India and G S Ghurye, a prominent sociologist. The context of the debate was concerned with the formulation and implementation of a proper policy for tribals in the post-independence period. Virginius Xaxa (2008), while writing about this debate locates the genesis of this debate in Elwin’s book *The Baiga*, which was published in 1939. According to Xaxa, the central question of the debate was “whether the current state or condition of isolation of the tribes should be continued or whether they should be drawn into the larger society, so as to enjoy the benefits available to the general population” (6). Similarly, Akhup (2013, 5) also discerns that “the

approach to tribes in India as an ‘isolate’ entity got its primary articulation from Verrier Elwin and Christopher von Furer-Haimendorf based on field work observation ranging across tribes of Chotanagpur plateau and the North East since 1930s.”

However, Xaxa suggests, Elwin changed his earlier position by 1960 and “he no longer advocated the policy of isolation” (2008, 6) as a result of severe criticism against him as a propagator of the framework ‘isolation’. On the contrary, Ghurye (1980),<sup>40</sup> in his study on scheduled tribes in India, espoused the policy of ‘assimilation’. It refers to the idea that tribals are backward Hindus and they must be completely assimilated with the Hindu culture and larger society of India. “This view placed tribals at the lowest position on the tribe-caste-class continuum, a conceptual paradigm used for understanding the process of change in tribal life (Xaxa 2008, 6). Later, in Akhup’s view, this framework found its “methodological operationalisation in ‘sanskritisation’ by M N Srinivas” (2013, 5). Many of the scholars in tribal studies, including our nationalist leadership in the post independence period, problematised the framework of both ‘isolation’ and ‘assimilation’.

According to Xaxa:

Neither of the two policies was thought adequate in independent India by the nationalist leadership. This is evident from the provisions laid down in the Indian constitution for tribals...These constitutional provisions thus aimed at safeguarding, protecting and promoting the interest of tribal people. If one were to examine these provisions more carefully one would find that the constitution clearly adopts a policy of integration rather than of isolation or assimilation, albeit without using the term and concept of integration even once (2008, 6).

Recently, a new discussion came up on the duality of ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ and it has greater significance in the domain of tribal studies. Some of the latest studies on

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<sup>40</sup> Originally published in 1963.

environment, wild-life conservation and forest policies meticulously problematised the duality in the understanding of nature.<sup>41</sup> In fact, most of the forest conservation efforts, informed by this duality, consequently associated adivasis with ‘culture’ and dissociated it from ‘nature’. Thus, nature, mainly forest, was conceived as a pure category and expelled the category and life of adivasis from that nature. In this backdrop, the environmental historians like Rangarajan and Saberval (2003) propose the significance of a ‘symbiosis between nature and culture’ in the conservation of Indian forests. Essentially, a political process is embedded in all efforts to conserve forests and natural resources. In a similar fashion, Agrawal (1995) and Rangarajan (2003) articulated that it is important to recognise the significance in critically understanding the political process implied in the conservation efforts. The linkage between the power relation and political process in the context of conservation efforts is clearly disseminated in the following argument:

The regulation of a group’s access to and use of resources implies the existence of relations of power that will enable such regulation to take place. And the exercise of power is a political process, irrespective of the degree to which consensus exists between the regulated and the regulated (Rangarajan, 2003, 4).

In the light of these discussions at the national context, when we turn to Kerala, it could be seen that 16 wildlife sanctuaries and five national parks have been established so far since its formation as a separate state.<sup>42</sup> Many of these wildlife sanctuaries and national

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<sup>41</sup> See the studies of Agrawal (1995); Guha (2003); Saberwal and Mahesh Rangarajan, eds. (2003) and Sivaramakrishnan (2003).

<sup>42</sup>The 16 wildlife sanctuaries are: Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary (Tiger Reserve), Parambikulam Wildlife Sanctuary, Idukki Wildlife Sanctuary, Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary, Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuary, Peppara Wildlife Sanctuary, Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuary, Peechi-Vazhaani Wildlife Sanctuary, Chimmony Wildlife Sanctuary, Aaralam Wildlife Sanctuary, Mangalavanam (Bird

parks encompassed adivasi habitations or a significant number of adivasis settled adjacent to these establishments. As a consequence of the establishments of these wildlife sanctuaries and national parks, the forest department enforced many restrictions on the customary rights of adivasis with respect to forest. For instance, Kuriyarkutti adivasi settlement is located adjacent to the Parambikulam Wildlife Sanctuary in Palakkad district and adivasis in Kuriyarkutti settlement have been restricted from collecting resources of wildlife sanctuary by the forest department. In fact, there has been lot of pressure by the government to forcefully dislocate the adivasi colony from the forest area.

The scheduled caste and scheduled tribe welfare committee constituted in the tenth Kerala Legislative Assembly (1996-2001) conducted a study on ‘problems of adivasi *kudis* (homes) in Parambikulam Wildlife Sanctuary and submitted a report to the government. In the preface of the report, the committee outlined the plight of adivasis residing inside the sanctuary. The report noted the problems confronted by the adivasis in the following words:

Those who have been enquiring the cultural roots of Kerala should have studied the adivasis population who are fighting towards nature and struggling to survive within the forest by confronting poverty and serious diseases in Wayanad, Palakkad, Idukki, Pathanamthitta and Thiruvananthapuram districts of Kerala. The outside world is totally unaware about their miseries. Earlier their primary foods were water from the lake, honey and *kattu kizhangu* (different variety of tubers) from the forest and moved in the forest freely. But now they are afraid concerning the forest protection acts and the social transition around them. Their birth was in the forest but paradoxically, they

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Sanctuary), Thattekkaad (Bird Sanctuary), Kurinjimala Wildlife Sanctuary, Choolannur Peafowl Sanctuary and Malabar Wildlife Sanctuary. The existing national parks are named as Eravikulam National Park, Silent Valley, Pampadum Shola National Park, Mathikettan Shola National Park and Anamudi Shola National Park. (I have collected the primary information about these sanctuaries and parks as part of my field work from the offices of the Kerala forest department mainly in Wayanad and Palakkad).

could not attain the ownership of both forest lands and their dwelling places  
(Cited in Prakash 2002, 60).

The committee also marked their anxiety in the provisions of the forest act which prevents the adivasis from collecting raw materials for constructing their traditional huts and houses. On the basis of it, the committee had recommended certain measures to resolve the problems of adivasis in the Parambikulam Wildlife Sanctuary. Given these facts, it is not realistically possible to take each particular wildlife sanctuary or national parks and to draw out its specific implications on adivasi life and culture which is beyond the scope of this study. Instead, I attempted to point out some of the broad implications of the establishment of Wildlife Sanctuaries and National Parks on adivasi life and culture in Kerala within the context of Indian forest policies and the ideological notions centered on it in the postcolonial era.

In the discourse of Nehruvian development in postcolonial era, big dams and canal projects occupied a prominent place. Some of his statements refer to the close linkage between modern economic development and the dam projects. While dedicating the Bhakra-Nangal project to the nation in 1963, Nehru reiterated that “this dam has been built with the unrelenting toil of man for the benefit of mankind and therefore is worthy of worship. May you call it a temple or a gurdwara or a mosque it inspires our admiration and reverence”.<sup>43</sup> In another occasion, when he was addressing the people those who had been displaced by the Hirakud Dam in 1948, he said, “if you are to suffer, you should suffer in the interest of the country.” Paradoxically, the developmental trajectory of the nation has almost completed six decades and half and our rural populations and

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<sup>43</sup> See Batabyal’s (2007) collection of Modern Indian Speeches.

marginalized sections have been suffering in the name of development, meant for a small minority of upper class and elites in our society. In other words, the rhetorical discourse in terms of 'nation building' has been constantly excluding rural poor and marginalised sections to the periphery of the nation since independence to the present. Among these sufferers, the most impoverished are adivasi population in the country. Most of them lost their forest lands, livelihoods and customary rights as a result of this developmental projects particularly, dams along with hydro-electric power projects and irrigation canals.

The development paradigm of Kerala was not absolutely corresponding to the Nehruvian notions of development in the post state formation period, even though one can mark a number of resemblances and continuity from the Nehruvian paradigm of development. One of the domains of continuity can be seen in the construction of dams as part of hydro-electric power and irrigation projects. The Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) owns 36 dams as part of 15 hydro-electric power projects in Kerala so far and a few are under the consideration.<sup>44</sup> It is interesting to note that according to another account, 52 dams have constructed in the Kerala's territory of Western Ghats (Prakash 2002, 64). The dam projects such as Idukki, Chimmony, Karappuzha, Banasura Sagar and Kabini displaced a large number of adivasis from their original habitats. Similarly, adivasis lost their land as part of Parambikulam dam project. However, the dam is owned and operated by Tamil Nadu, the neighbouring state of Kerala. And very recently, in 2001, Adivasis, particularly Kadars, have been evicted from their land and forest in connection with Athirapally hydro-electric power projects in Thrissur district. This shows that the eviction

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<sup>44</sup> I have collected this information from the website, <http://www.expert-eyes.org/dams.html> retrieved on 15 October, 2012.

of adivasis from the forest and its adjacent areas has been continuing and still prevalent as in the colonial period. It evokes the question, where does adivasis locate in the unhindered trajectory of developmental state which remains unanswered.

Prathama Banerjee (2006), by looking at the region Jharkand and Bengal, Jangal Mahal, argues:

Adivasi politics would take on a more radical and self-consciously political form through the 1960s and 70s. At this level, the very identity of the Indian ‘tribal’ would be seen as made up of their predominantly political tradition of rebellion and recalcitrance. ‘Tribal’ culture itself here would be seen as a culture of subversive, marginal politics, not quite shared by mainstream Indian society – played out through cultural symbols of struggle and solidarity...” (105).

One cannot find similar lineage of resistance and rebellion as mentioned in the above passage among the adivasis of Kerala during the same period. It does not mean that there was no resistance and response noticed among them in the context of Kerala in the same period. Indeed, the repertoire of contention might be very different. A detailed account of resistance in the context of Kerala has been presented in the next chapter.



## **Chapter 5**

### **Marginality, Land Question and Adivasi Agency in Kerala: The Case of Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha (AGMS)**

How Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha as a contemporary social movement in Kerala has engaged with the question, marginality of adivasis as a complex socio-political, cultural and economic condition, constitutes the major substance of this chapter. In this study the notion of marginality has been situated at two levels: one, marginality has resulted from the practices of development constructed within the larger project of modernity which paid very little attention to the culture, rights and agency of the adivasi communities. Second, how marginality has been used as a liberating force by the AGMS movement to construct a counter discourse on land, adivasi culture and identity, the community life of adivasis and largely the idea of development. Further, this chapter also looks at, what meaning these efforts of AGMS has led to, in terms of producing the idea of political and constructing a new agency for adivasis in Kerala.

The movement AGMS emerged in the post 1990s which is a period that can be broadly characterized as a neo-liberal era on the one hand and the era that marks emergence of new subaltern, dalit and adivasi identity assertions and movements in India on the other hand. Therefore, the historical specificity, emergence and substantive articulations of the movement will be examined in this chapter against the backdrop of the socio-political terrain where different discourses on modernization and development of marginalized communities have been constructed in the Kerala society since 1990s.

This chapter is presented in six sections. The first section mainly describes the socio-historical and political context where AGMS has emerged as a movement. The second section briefly maps the history of adivasi mobilisations during the period 1950s to the 1980s in Kerala. I did not get much information about these mobilisations from my empirical field work (mainly personal interviews and focus group discussions) and thus, this section is largely developed by referring to the secondary data. In the third section, we look at NGOs as part of civil society organizations and explain the logical basis for this conception. It gives particular attention on the relationship between NGOs and adivasi community and their land question in the 1980s in Kerala. Subsequently, this section examines whether the interventions of these civil society organizations created an initial impetus to launch land grab agitations in the first half of 1990s under the leadership of C K Janu. The next section aims to analyse the intervening processes of AGMS in constructing new discourses around adivasi land as part of their movement activism. In the fifth section of this chapter an attempt has been made to understand the notion of adivasi agency developed as part of the movement AGMS. In keeping with the conceptual notion of agency which I explicated in the introduction chapter, this section attempts to derive the meaning of agency by looking at the narration of the informants, mainly adivasis, to validate and strengthen that conceptualisation of adivasi agency. As part of this endeavour, I closely examine the invocations of community, identity and agency highlighted in the discourses of AGMS by locating it in the historical continuity of a larger debate surrounded on these themes inaugurated by the rise of ‘new’ social movements and identity politics in India since 1980s. In the final concluding section of

this chapter, I mainly encapsulate the major arguments and points discussed in this chapter.

### **Genesis of the Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha (AGMS)**

This movement emerged as a result of the consolidation of various land grab agitations that mainly took place in Wayanad district since early 1990s under the leadership of C K Janu.<sup>45</sup> The earlier form of AGMS was *Adivasi-Dalit Samara Samithi* (ADSS), a conglomeration of both adivasis and dalits, constituted in 2001 for under taking the immediate issues of starvation deaths and poverty prevalent among adivasis in Kerala during 2000-2001. In 2001, a number of adivasis died in Kerala due to poverty and starvation. The main stream news papers<sup>46</sup> have reported that around 32 adivasis died in the adivasi inhabited area of the state, particularly Palakkad, Kannur and Wayanad districts during the month of May, June and July in 2001. This had unveiled serious apprehensions and challenges to the widely acclaimed idea of 'Kerala Model of Development' and it also demonstrated the 'marginality' of adivasis which is seemingly absurd and contradictory. These predicaments created deep discontent among adivasis towards the Kerala state. Under these circumstances, it seems interesting to look at how the state government addressed the predicaments of adivasis with regard to poverty and starvation. Did the Government perceive the issue in a very reductive and tangential manner? The government decided to distribute rice and other necessary groceries through

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<sup>45</sup> C K Janu belongs to Adiya community, which is still the most deprived subsection of the adivasi communities in Kerala and currently she is the chairperson of AGMS.

<sup>46</sup> I have referred mainly to the Malayalam daily news papers, *Mathrubhumi* and *Madyamam* and the English daily, *The Hindu*, from May to July, 2001 to validate this information regarding the deaths of adivasis due to poverty and starvation, collected as part of my field work in 2010.

public distribution system. The rationale behind this intervention had been explained by the authorities in terms of certain factors – in fact, which were only the outermost symptoms of a deep structural crisis – which led to the starvation deaths of adivasis. However, the policies did not touch the real cause of this incident indicating to marginality and inequality structured in the society.

According to the official accounts, crucial factors for the starvation deaths of adivasis were polluted water, deficiency in nutritious food, high level of alcohol consumption and unhygienic conditions of the adivasis. In this context, one can see that all the temporary measures taken up by the government to address the factors mentioned above were symptomatic of their inability to situate the immediate predicaments of adivasis within the larger process of socio-historical and political subjugation and marginality of adivasis in Kerala. Therefore, the leaders of adivasis particularly C K Janu were not convinced about the ad hoc measures taken up by the government in the context of starvation deaths among adivasis. Along with Janu, many other adivasi and dalit leaders envisaged an enduring solution to the deprivation of adivasis in Kerala. Consequently, adivasis erected refugee huts (*kudil ketti samaram*) in front of the state secretariat and cliff house (the official residence of chief minister) at the state capital, Thiruvananthapuram on 29 August, 2001 under the auspices of *Adivasi-Dalit Samara Samithi* (Adivasi-Dalit Agitation Council). C K Janu, the central figure of the agitation narrated the beginning of the *Kudil Ketti Samaram* (build-hut or refugee hut agitation) in the following words:

There was a specific reason for us to start the struggle. In 2001, thirty-six adivasis died of starvation but when this problem was presented to the government they evaded responsibility by giving lame excuses such as claiming that it was a result of the lack of nutritious food, etc. We began the struggle saying we need the conducive material circumstances to exist... There is no

history of a community being fed on the charity of the government, right? What we need is land to produce in order to survive.<sup>47</sup>

This agitation, which was a unique and distinct type of adivasi agitation till date, had continued for 48 days and widely attracted attention of the public. The above mentioned narration of C K Janu gives emphasis on the question of land. She firmly believes that obtaining an entitlement to agricultural land is the only long-term solution to this problem. Thus, this agitation marks a clear distinction from all other efforts in the recent history of Kerala to retain the alienated land of adivasis because, it effectively and profoundly posited the plight of adivasis in general and the land question in particular in the realm of Kerala's public sphere. In this context, the main demands of this agitation can be outlined as follows.

- 1) To provide five acres of land for each landless adivasi family to prevent starvation and poverty.
- 2) Government should withdraw the petition filed in the Supreme Court against Nallathambi Thera's public interest litigation.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> I have taken this excerpt from an interview of C K Janu that had given to Rekharaj and published in Satyanarayana and Susie Tharu. Eds. (2011, 442). The same concerns she shared with me also when I interviewed her in 2008 and 2009.

<sup>48</sup> Dr. Nallathambi Thera, a medical practitioner based in Sulthan Bathery, Wayanad district in Kerala filed a case in the Kerala High court in 1993. In this, he complained that the government was trying to amend the Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction of Transfer of Lands and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Act, 1975 which had been included in the Ninth Schedule of the constitution. As a result, the High Court ordered that the government should enact the act within 6 months and they should strictly follow 6th schedule of the constitution which has been dealing with the restoration of alienated adivasi land. Court allowed and had given a deadline to the government to take necessary action on this recommendation in another 6 months since April, 1994. Later it had been extended to another one year. Nevertheless, the state did not do anything constructively in favour of adivasis.

3) Adivasis land should be incorporated into the fifth schedule of the constitution.<sup>49</sup>

M Geethanandan,<sup>50</sup> a leader of the Adivasi-Dalit Samara Samithi has explained the reasons to raise the third demand in the following words. He says:

If the adivasi inhabited area is included in the fifth schedule of the constitution on the basis of article 244 of the Indian Constitution, they will get constitutional protection and it will also come under the jurisdiction of the state's governor. It would be helpful to protect the forest as well as adivasi rights on forest in a much better way than the present condition. It will also ensure the protection of biodiversity and bio-resources. However, the adivasi inhabited region in Kerala, Tamilnadu, Karnataka and West Bengal are not included in the fifth schedule of the constitution so far.<sup>51</sup>

This explanation shows the discrepancy between constitutional measures and substantive reality of adivasis in Kerala as similar to that in many parts of the country. It also signifies different stances between the judiciary and the legislature over adivasi land issue. From this particular instance, one could see that judiciary is more supportive to the cause of adivasis whereas the legislature takes an indifferent position towards them. Therefore, these deprived sections of the society still believe in the constitution and they anticipate that their current predicaments would be improved to a great extent if the provisions for adivasis and dalits already ensured in the constitution are administered properly.

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<sup>49</sup> All these demands are outlined here by talking to the leaders of this agitation at a later stage and also referring to the charter of demands they had submitted to the government. A Malayalam daily recently reported that, after 15 years since the third demand was originally raised the central government is planning to announce 31 village panchayats situated in 5 districts of Kerala (Wayanad, Kannur, Palakkad, Malappuram and Idukki) and one municipality as adivasi zones very soon. In this regard the department of adivasi welfare has submitted their recommendations and suggestions to the central ministry (See Mathrubhumi Daily, January 1, 2016). I shall discuss this matter at some length in the latter part of this chapter.

<sup>50</sup> He belongs to one of the dalit communities in Kerala. However, he has been in the leadership of Adivasi-Dalit Samara Samithi in the beginning and later exclusively in AGMS.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with M Geethanandan, 20 January, 2008 at Sultan Bathery in Wayanad.

The build-hut agitation induced new enthusiasm and tenacity among the adivasis which created a need for an organization exclusively for adivasis. C K Janu and M Geethanandan captured this new enthusiasm and prepared the ground for a new movement of adivasis. In the mean time, adivasis carried out a *yatra* (expedition) from Kasargod, the border district of northern Kerala, to the state capital, Thiruvananthapuram under the leadership of C K Janu. The main purpose of this *yatra* was to promulgate the content of the charter of rights they submitted before the government as part of the build-hut agitation. This *yatra* attempted to create awareness among the public about the predicaments of adivasis in Kerala and by which to invite and ensure the support of the public for this agitation. At the end of this journey they organized a mass meeting of the adivasis at Thiruvananthapuram and publicly declared the formation of *Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha* (AGMS) – the Grand Council of Adivasis – on 3 October, 2001. M Geethanandan, the state coordinator of AGMS, explained the rationale for the formation of the organisation as follows:

AGMS is the final outcome of various types of small land grab agitations and the unrest among adivasis since 1990. The new initiative helped the integration of adivasis from Kasargod to Thiruvananthapuram. It is a movement against the negligence of the state towards the deprivation of adivasis and it is a collective assertion instead of the isolated agitation that took place in different parts of Kerala in the past to retrieve the alienated land of adivasis in Kerala. No one has expected this kind of massive flow of adivasis to the agitation. AGMS is an umbrella platform even though, we did not have a clear and specific plan of action and direction at the beginning about the future of the movement.<sup>52</sup>

Examining this narration, I argue that it denotes one of the important characteristic features of new social movement since the movement began without any specific plan of action and a vision about the future of the movement. The primary focus of the

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<sup>52</sup> Interview with Mr. M Geethanandan, 20 January, 2008.

movement was the marginality of adivasis and their land question. That is to say, it was not formed on the basis of any a priori theory or ideology but strictly grounded on a particular community issue. Similarly, they are not very keen about the larger social structure and social transformation. Their immediate concern was to address their survival question by seeking land rights. However, contrary to the characterisation of new social movements formulated by the Western social movement theories, AGMS attempts to address the subsistence and survival question of a marginalized group.

With the build-hut agitation for 48 days, the United Democratic Front (UDF)<sup>53</sup> led government under the Chief Ministership of A K Antony came to an agreement with AGMS on October 16, 2001. As part of this agreement the government accepted the basic demands of the adivasi agitation and the specific stipulations contained in the agreement are as follows:

1. Five acres of land to all Adivasi families with less than 1 acre. To begin with, 42,000 acres of land of plots between 1-5 acres would be distributed while the rest would be distributed as and when lands were located and made available. This work would begin from January 1 to December 31, 2002 giving 5 acres where possible as and when suitable lands are found.
2. A master plan would be drawn up before December 2001, to be included in the 10<sup>th</sup> five-year plan beginning in 2002 in which the focus would be to support the above beneficiaries for a maximum of 5 years until they reach self-sufficiency.
3. A cabinet decision would include Adivasi areas in the Fifth Schedule and a proposal would be made that would be sent to the centre for further notification by the President. Meanwhile, suitable legislation would be issued to protect the land allotted under this agreement.
4. The Kerala government would abide by the Supreme Court judgment in relation to the case pending. In this case, the Kerala government had

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<sup>53</sup> Prominently, there are two political coalitions in Kerala which are United Democratic Alliance (UDF) and Left Democratic Alliance (LDF). In which UDF comprises the right-wing parties led by Indian National Congress and LDF consists left-wing parties led by Communist Party of India (Marxist). These two coalitions have been sharing the state power in alternate periods in the last three decades.



challenged the High Court judgment, which struck down the Kerala government's earlier repeal of the Kerala Scheduled Tribes Act 1975 and declared contempt of court for not having implemented the High Court judgment of 1993 to implement the 1975 Act.

5. Participation of the Samara Samithy in all decision-making and implementation processes on all matters related to this agreement.
6. A Tribal Mission would be constituted to carry out all the above, headed by a senior officer of the Indian Administrative Service (The Indigenous World 2002, 338-339).

On the basis of this agreement AGMS decided to call off their 48 days long refugee camp or build-hut agitation. The transition of AGMS from there on revolved around this agreement. The failure of the government in accomplishing their promises offered to the movement and the way the movement negotiated and engaged with those responses of the state complicates the trajectory of the movement.<sup>54</sup> Muthanga agitation and *Nilpu smaram* (Stand Up agitation) are two significant examples of the later efforts of AGMS to pressurise the government to keep their promises which is discussed later in this chapter. The responses of adivasis towards adivasi land alienation in the period after the formation of the state of Kerala has been discussed in the next section.

### **Various Adivasi Mobilisations in Kerala (1950s-1980s)**

There were a few attempts made to document the mobilisations among adivasis in Kerala during the period 1950s to the late 1980s. Generally, whenever we speak about adivasi mobilisation or resistance in Kerala we begin from the *Kurichya* revolt against the British that happened in 1831. Much has been told and retold about the *Kurichya* revolt and hence this section focuses on the adivasi mobilisation since 1950 in Kerala. It seems very difficult to define or categorise the mobilisations during this period as social movement

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<sup>54</sup> This will be examined in the respective sections of this chapter without strictly following a chronological account of the trajectory of AGMS.

and therefore, here it is referred to as mobilisations rather than social movements. Apart from this, it is worth mentioning here that this section is mainly written based on secondary literature. The primary reason is that I have done my field work in the districts, Wayanad, Palakkad and Idukki – three major adivasi inhabited areas in Kerala – but I could not collect data either because most of the leaders of the earlier mobilisations were not alive or because the informants gave very vague and ambiguous picture about those periods.

Two important sources have been used in understanding the mobilisation of adivasis during the above mentioned period. First one is by P R G Mathur (1977), an anthropologist from Kerala and the other is a recent report entitled *Wayanad Initiative: A Situational Study and Feasibility Report for the Comprehensive Development of Adivasi Communities of Wayanad* prepared and compiled by centre of excellence in IIM, Kozhikode. Both these books discussed the mobilisations in Kerala since independence with a focus on Wayanad. According to these accounts, the first mobilisation was Wayanad Adivasi Swayam Sevak Sangh (hereafter WASSS) formed in 1963 by C M Gulikan, a person belonging to Adiya adivasi community. A significant point made by P R G Mathur's is that most of the members constituted in this organization were tribals and they also wanted to limit its membership exclusively for adivasis. But his subsequent description gives another fact which was related to the involvement of a non-adivasi person who belongs to Thiyya community called P T Vijayan. Later he became the general secretary of this organization and C M Gulikan, the president of it.

One could reasonably assume from this that a non-advasi person holding one of the key positions in the organization might be a deviation from the larger interests of it. The subsequent restructuring in the leadership of the WASSS marks two major shifts. The first one is the replacement of C M Gulikan, an advasi leader with a Kurichya leader named as K V Kelu which indicates the growing Kurichya domination in the organization. Second is the predominant presence of non-advasis, especially Nairs who were also associated with the political party, Bharatiya Jana Sangh popularly known as Jana Sangh at that point in time. It has always been known that Jana Sangh was a precursory form and parental organization of Janata party which later emerged as Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and it was ideologically very close to RSS. Thus, the second shift clearly manifests the surreptitious penetration of Hindutva ideology into the organisation.

WASSS was registered under the societies registration act on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1967. It was known as the first voluntary organization among advasis and functioned until 1972. They put forward the demands such as “exemption of stamp duty for civil suits of the advasis, exemption of the trail by the advocates, exemption to be given in respect of commission *batha* (allowance), witness *batha*, writing fee to the advocate clerks which is very high with respect to civil Court, and finally establishment of tribal tribunals recommended by the Debhar commission” (Mathur 1977, 189). Meanwhile, a group of people mainly influenced by the Hindutva ideology expressed their discontent with many of the organizational decisions and eventually left the organization. Then they formed a new organization called the *Wayanad Advasi Sangh*. Another version of the formation of this new organisation accounted by the report, *Wayanad Initiative* (2006) is that Jana

Sangh sympathizers left WASSS when Marxist sympathizers dominated the organization and constituted a new organization for adivasis. If one can interpret, it indicates the fact that many of the leaders and members of this organization were the sympathizers of various political parties mainly left and Jana sangh. Hence, these sympathizers or supporters influenced the organization into their own ideological positions and attempted to capture the organization.

*Wayanad Adivasi Sangham (WAS)* was mainly constituted of the people from Kurichya community who were also land owners. The founding leaders such as Chappan, C A Kunhiraman, Pulliara Raman and Kungan represented Kurichya community. Contrary to the parent organization WASSS, which consisted of all groups and political ideologies, WAS never promoted other communities entering into it. The stated objectives of the Wayanad Adivasi Sangham were a) “creation of a tribal district in Wayanad (b) restoration of alienated tribal land (c) opposing the spread of Christianity and Islam in Wayanad and (d) abolition of bonded labor” (Ibid 2006, 43). WAS had continued its activities until the declaration of Emergency in 1975. Many of its members were arrested during the period of emergency not because of their association with this organization but due to their active involvement in Jan Sangh. Consequently, they were compelled to stop their functioning for a short period of time. Now the organization is very active among the Kurichya land holding community and is working under the patronage of the Bharathiya Janata Party. Similarly, the supporters of the Indian National Congress who had worked with WASSS moved out of the organization and launched another organization named Kerala Adivasi Samajam. Later it was transformed as Adivasi Vikas Parishad. Indeed, the rest of the members of WASSS supported the Communist Party of

India (Marxist) and their aim was to form another tribal organization in the district named, Kerala Girivarga Sangam. This new group functioned as a supporting organization under the patronage of Kerala Karshaka Thozhilali Union (KSKTU), the peasant union of CPM. However, the division and partisan politics between CPI (M) and CPI negatively affected the growth of this organisation and ultimately it failed to seek the support of the larger public.

### **Civil Society Organisations, Adivasi Community and Land Question since 1980s**

In India, the 1980s witnessed large scale dissent particularly among the workers and poor people towards the functioning of the state. The state was perceived to have failed in providing welfare measures to the needy people and considerably not successful in guaranteeing constitutional safeguards and protection particularly to the dalits, adivasis and other marginalized communities. This was the context in which non-governmental organizations (NGOs) extensively emerged in India. In this backdrop, one could see that in the latter half of 1980s a plethora of NGOs emerged in Wayanad and Palakkad primarily aimed at the upliftment and development of the adivasis. Many of these organizations followed a mainstream notion on development and consciously or unconsciously reinforced the liberal form of patron-client relationship. Another motivation to launch many of these organizations was to acquire funds both from national and international donor agencies, including the state. All of them talked – often rhetorically – in terms of marginalized communities, particularly about adivasis which is also a promising way to get huge funding. In this study, I consider NGOs as part of civil society organizations and I shall explain the logical reasoning behind this conception later. An attempt is made in this section to explain the relationship between NGOs and

adivasi community and their land question in the 1980s Kerala. Subsequently, this section examines whether the interventions of these civil society organizations created an initial ground to launch land grab agitations in the first half of 1990s under the leadership of C K Janu.

As mentioned earlier, Geethanandan, state coordinator of the AGMS, remarked that AGMS is a culmination of the consolidation of various land grab agitations that took place in Kerala and particularly in Wayanad under the leadership of C K Janu. Thus, all efforts to restore adivasi land since 1990 in one way or the other are related to C K Janu's name. Before I embark on the specific adivasi land grab agitations launched in the late 1980s and 1990s, it is worth pointing out her leading role in the formation of South Zone Adivasi Forum (here after it would be referred as SZAF) in 1992.

SZAF was an offshoot of the first *Adivasi Sangamam* held at Wayanad in the early 1990s. The *Sangamam* was organized by the adivasis with the support of NGOs. Here it should be noted that C K Janu was the chairperson of the organizing committee of the *Sangamam*. This was the beginning of Janu's public appearance as a leader by taking this important responsibility. In this context, I make an attempt to critically look at the affirmation of many NGOs that had played a significant role as civil society organizations (CSOs) in creating a 'new consciousness' among adivasis about their rights particularly in Wayanad. Here civil society organizations mainly constitute nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and in which, mainly two organizations known as Solidarity and HiLDA (High Land Development Association) require more explanation. These two NGOs emerged as a result of the discontents of a group of people

mainly Christians who had been working with Wayanad Social Service Society (WASS) and Bathery Social Service Society (BSSS) respectively.<sup>55</sup>

Jose Sebastian, one of the founding members of the NGO *Solidarity* had spoken about the formation of it in the following:

We, a few young people had actively involved in the welfare activities of the WSSS. One of the areas it focused was adivasi welfare and their upliftment. Gradually, we realized that apart from some minor efforts they didn't have true interest to make fundamental and persistent changes in adivasi life. Besides, they always reinforced a kind of patron-client relationship through their service activities. These approaches had been questioned by a few of us in our internal meetings. Ideologically we acquired inspiration from liberation theology and Paulo Freirean philosophy. After a considerable time spent in the organization finally, we understood that we cannot do much by staying with this organization and their institutional structure. Thus, we decided to come out of the organization and launched another one named as Solidarity in 1982. The primary aim of this organization was to provide intellectual resources for the adivasis to address their problems. Later we actively involved in literacy programmes. We are proud to say that C K Janu was an illiterate woman when she associated with us and subsequently she became one of the coordinators of the expansion of literacy programmes among various adivasi communities.<sup>56</sup>

The main strategies they adopted were in educating, conscientisation<sup>57</sup> and strengthening the power of the people to take up their issues. In the beginning, Solidarity focused on training and motivation with the intention to produce leaders and facilitators for social transformation. Local leaders, youth and students were their target groups. By 1984, they

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<sup>55</sup> A 'diocese' refers to an administrative district under the pastoral care of a Bishop in the Christian Church. Most of the dioceses in India have social service societies. According to their official statement these societies are the official organs to support the needy people and to undertake welfare activities under the auspices of each diocese. Likewise, both WASS and BSSS were the two social service societies under the Mananthvady and Sultan Bathery dioceses respectively.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Mr. Jose Sebastian, 10 January 2008.

<sup>57</sup> Here, the term conscientisation refers to the notion invoked by Paulo Friere. According to him, this notion implies a process which equips the people to understand the social and political undercurrence of inequality.

started non-formal education programmes for illiterates and particularly for adivasi communities. Narayanan, an active member of Solidarity in the beginning said:

Solidarity undertook various action programmes for tribal communities and also promoted the community to take up issues by themselves. Manifold issues were undertaken both by Solidarity and the community such as fair wages, equal wages for women, proper housing, drinking water, action against corruption in the government departments, drinking water facilities, infrastructure like road and electricity, and also demands to make a conducive atmosphere to protect their art and cultural practices”.<sup>58</sup>

By mid 1980s, Solidarity started a massive awareness campaign mainly for the public and youth. Some of the objectives were: 1) to generate a new awareness among the youth and the public; 2) to equip the youth to take up the responsibility for social development; 3) to create critical awareness on the social, political, and cultural issues and problems; 4) to conduct seminars and workshops to create a positive image and empathy towards tribals; 5) to inculcate reading habit among the public particularly among the youth and provide reference facility for researchers; 6) to make available information services in the field of employment and higher education and 7) to promote tribal art and culture. On the other hand, HiLDA formed in 1987 by the Bathery Social Service Society followed a “more activist role wherein the external agents, in this case their staff, play a more active and direct role. Adivasis are recruited as staff and thus a mild form of cooption takes place” (Anita Cheria et al. 1997, 61). In another innovative move they started informal educational programmes in adivasi languages. Both these organizations found literacy as an effective means to conscientise adivasis. It was mainly informed by a Paulo Freirean framework which was based on the idea of ‘praxis’ which refers to “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (2005, 51).

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<sup>58</sup> Interview with Mr. Narayanan, 15 January 2008.



### ***Civil Society: Concept and Its Meaning***

It is necessary to explain the theoretical basis for referring these NGOs as civil society organizations (CSOs). In other words, it is pertinent to ask how far civil society is an appropriate category to be labeled as NGOs. Thus, it is discussed in detail the conceptual meaning of civil society and CSOs by looking at the relationship between NGOs – mainly Solidarity and HiLDA – and adivasi community and their land question in Kerala.

The concept civil society is a contested terrain in social science. When we look at the concept historically one could see the diverse meanings that have been assigned to it. Perhaps, it has carried contrary meanings as well. Marx and Engels wrote, “the word ‘civil society’ emerged in the eighteenth century, when property relationship had already extricated themselves from the ancient and medieval communal society. Civil society as such only develops with the bourgeoisie...” (1963, pp. 26-27). It is evident from this observation that this was an attempt to conceive civil society in connection with the nature of property relationship, private ownership and bourgeoisie. One may agree or disagree with this conceptualization. However, no one can deny the long historical trajectory of its beginning since the eighteenth century. In fact, Sunil Khilnani (2001) pointed out that the concept civil society had a much longer history which goes to pre-Hegelian period and this concept was on the decline in the classical Western political theory. Hence this concept can be found in the writings of British Enlightenment philosophers particularly Locke, Hume and Ferguson and thus dates back to 17<sup>th</sup> century. Subsequently, he added that different historical strands on civil society in the pre-Hegelian period are: “...Roman law, classical republicanism, Pufendorf and the natural law tradition, Locke, Montesquieu, the theorists of commercial society...” (Ibid, 17).

In brief, the contemporary connotation of the concept is discussed without losing its historical depth. The recent renewal of interest on the idea of civil society can be located in the late 1960s and early 1970s. According to Khilnani (Ibid, 16) this concept “gained popularity among radicals disaffected with Marxism” in the late 1960s. Consequently, “the existing structures of Left politics (dominated by Communist Parties) were rejected, in favour of ‘social movements’ – these were seen as more authentic embodiments of social demands and interests. Equally, the recovery of Antonio Gramsci’s work...” also played a crucial role in reviving the concept civil society. The widespread revival of the concept in many parts of the world can also be linked with the economic and political changes happened globally particularly, the demise of Soviet Marxism and the subsequent “crisis of socialism, as an experience and an ideology...” in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Kumar 1993, 375).

Now let me turn to elucidate the meaning earmarked on the concept civil society. The foremost and powerful articulation of civil society was based on Gramscian conceptualization of civil society. Gramsci’s theoretical and critical engagement with the Marx’s idea of base and superstructure provided new insights on the notion of civil society. Gramsci developed his notion of civil society while attempting to develop a theory of the state in which the state is conceived as a compound of civil society and political society. Hoare and Smith noted that, in Gramscian framework, state is defined as “political society + civil society”. Later Gramsci pointed out that “in concrete reality civil society and the state are one and the same” (Cited in Hoare and Smith 1992, 208). While examining the problem of leadership in the development of Italy as a nation and also looking at the modern state over there, he writes:

The modern state substitutes for the mechanical bloc of social groups their subordination to the active hegemony of the directive and dominant group, hence abolishes certain autonomies, which nevertheless are reborn in other forms, as parties, trade unions and cultural associations. The contemporary dictatorships legally abolish these new forms of autonomy as well, and strive to incorporate them within State activity: the legal centralization of the entire national life in the hands of the dominant group becomes “totalitarian” (Cited in Hoare and Smith 1992, 54, N.4).

Through this observation, Gramsci succinctly unraveled the way hegemony has been imposed on the civil and political spaces of the society under totalitarian state and rule. In another place, Gramsci presents a more complicated picture of the relationship between state, civil society and political society. By referring to the well-known Italian historian and statesman, Guicciarddini who lived during the period of Italian renaissance, Gramsci observed that “[in his] assertion that two things are absolutely necessary for the life of a State: arms and religion” (Ibid, 170). Subsequently, by discussing Guicciarddini's formulae which is constituted by different binaries including political society and civil society, Gramsci observed that as per the political conception of the Renaissance, “religion was consent and the Church was civil society, the hegemonic apparatus of the ruling group”.

Then he writes:

For the latter did not have its own apparatus, i.e. did not have its own cultural and intellectual organisation, but regarded the universal ecclesiastical organisation as being that. The only way in which this differed from the Middle Ages was the fact that religion was openly conceived of and analysed as an *instrumentum regni*. It is from this point of view that the Jacobin attempt to institute a cult of the 'Supreme Being' should be studied. This appears to be an attempt to create an identity between State and civil society; to unify in a dictatorial way the constitutive elements of the State (in the organic, wider sense of the State proper + civil society), in a desperate endeavour to keep a hold on all of popular and national life. But it appears too as the first root of the modern lay State, independent of the Church, which seeks and finds in itself, in its own complex life, all the elements of its historical personality (Ibid).

Given this, let me briefly describe what exactly constitutes ‘civil society’, according to Gramsci. He conceives civil society as a separate domain different from political society. However, it keeps close relationship with the state. In his view, political society refers to “the armed forces, police, law courts and prisons, together with all the administrative departments concerning taxation, finance, etc” (Simon 1990, 71). In this context, he advocates that civil society has dual functions which can be categorized as negative and positive. Arun Patnaik interprets that Gramscian “civil society occupies a space in between class and the state”. According to him, the “positive” function constitutes “moral/intellectual” and the negative function forms “ideological/political” which “coexist within the domain of civil society”. Through this negative and positive function “civil society provides ‘rationalization’ (intellectual or moral elaboration) of class-state (negative element), on the one hand, and ethical-state, (positive element) on the other hand (2012, p. 579). That is to say, the civil society space encompasses “class instincts, class interests, and class struggle and tries to normalize them through family, religious association, cultural groups, and networks of social capital” (Ibid, 579-580).

Therefore, Gramsci considers it as one of the significant, also dangerous, moral principle of civil society. There are different modalities used by civil society organizations to construct consent especially, the consent of the subaltern classes. It provides different types of training to become good citizen. Education, both formal and informal, is an important method to teach the values of privacy in personal life, individual freedom, the significance of leadership and so on. It trains the people to follow the basic principle of civility: respect each other’s dignity in the society. As Arun Patnaik (Ibid, 581) writes, “it trains people to become intellectuals of some substance. It imparts rational and social

thinking over time. Each member now feels: ‘where there is will, there is a way’.” Patnaik in the above referred essay gives more emphasize on highlighting the significance of Gramscian critique of civil society in the contemporary context whereas he largely overlooked the Gramscian notion on counter hegemony embedded in the idea of civil society.

On the contrary, Mihir Shah, a civil society activist and academician, in a recent article entitled *Civil Society and Indian Democracy* (2014) looks at the possibility of the concept civil society as an agent of social transformation in the contemporary India. Mihir Shah also foregrounded his theoretical framework on Gramsci to propose two arguments. At one level, he argues that Partha Chatterjee’s recent attempts to induce new meaning on the categories of ‘political society’ and ‘civil society’ does not have much validity in understanding and explaining contemporary Indian society. At another level, by revisiting Gramsci, he suggests different empirical strands within civil society of India in the present context. According to him, Gramsci recognized dual role of civil society in which one is indeed, “legitimacy and hegemony”. It exercises through social institutions of civil society such as the church, the educational system, the media and so on. However, Mihir Shah goes beyond that and strongly articulates another role of civil society which has great significance in the current scenario. He rightly puts it, “Gramsci was, however, not merely concerned with the engendering of consent and the exercise of hegemony. He was much more interested in modes in which hegemony could be challenged. He called this ‘counter hegemony’ (2014, 38). Subsequently, he explains the meaning of counter hegemony or ‘challenging the hegemony’ as follows. He says, for Gramsci, there are two ways of challenging hegemony in which one is, a “war of maneuver” or ‘frontal war”

which indicates the “physical overthrow of the coercive apparatus of the state”. On the contrary, the second in Gramsci’s own terminology, is known as ‘war of position’ which refers to “resistance to domination with culture, rather than physical might as its foundation” (Ibid, 38). Hence, Gramsci perceived the significance of the transition from the first – war of maneuver – to the second – war of position – in the post war democratic conditions of the society as well as the corresponding problematic of political theory. Additionally, Buttigieg’s observation finds great importance particularly in the context of liberal democracy like India. He observes:

What makes the modern liberal democratic State robust and resilient, in Gramsci’s view, is not the power of coercion that it can exercise through political society (the legislature, the executive, the judiciary, the police, etc) but, rather, the myriad ways in which the core elements of its self definition and self-representation are internalised or, to some degree or another, freely endorsed by most of its citizens – including those who belong to social strata other than the ruling or privileged groups (Buttigieg 2005, 43 Cited in Mihir Sha 2014, 38).

All these theoretical endeavours are making true efforts to unravel Gramscian conceptualization of civil society and political society, to locate them in concrete empirical contexts of liberal democratic and postcolonial societies and to examine the extent to which it is useful to understand the present conjunctions of that society. In such an attempt, Mihir Shah further proposes four broad classifications of civil society action in contemporary India. According to him, the four different types of civil society action are:

1. Compassion and Charity
2. Developmental NGOs
3. Rights-based Activism and
4. Engaging the State and Leveraging the Market (2014, 40-41).

Let me briefly summarise the main features of each of this typology before I move on to the analysis of NGO interventions in the domain of adivasi life. Shah elucidated the first

typology – *Compassion and Charity* – as “the oldest form of civil society action” which “arises from the well-springs of compassion and charity” (Ibid, 40). India is a country that confronts mass poverty and inequality for a long time even after independence. According to Shah, this has resulted through the failures of two important institutions which are “market” and “government”. All capitalist democracies made huge investment on welfare and development programmes and in the case of India it was very visible in the postcolonial condition. However, he writes, “in India, both the magnitude of this effort and its quality has left much to be desired. Thus, the suffering of our people is not just a tale of market failure, it is also a failure of governance” (Ibid). Thus second type – *Developmental NGOs* – is an attempt to engage with these failures. In other words, much of the civil society action in India mainly the involvement of NGOs located under this type can “be seen as an effort to bridge the gap left by this dual failure of markets and government” (Ibid). These NGOs launched different type of welfare and development projects and programmes once it was purely under the authority of government. The welfare and development measures include schools, hospitals, watershed programmes and “are wide ranges of basic service delivery”.

Later Shah pointed out that they were also experiencing failures and had confronted the question of quality when they tried to expand engagements similar to that of government. Subsequently, he realizes that it is not merely a matter of quality but the problem has deep rooted connotations. Thus, he observes, “of course, the problem with such action is much deeper as it ultimately reinforces passive dependence of citizens upon the NGO, quite akin to what government welfare programmes have tended to do” (Ibid, 40). Despite recognizing deeper connotations for the failures of NGOs, he does not make any

close analytical scrutiny of those failures in connection with the larger ideas of capitalist development, neoliberal capitalist globalization and so on. Third type is *rights-based activism* about which he writes:

Taking a much more critical view of the “system” is civil society action of the third type in our classification. This is work based on providing a critique of mainstream practices of governments and markets and generating wider awareness of this critical view. The aim often is empowerment of citizens by making them aware of their rights under the Constitution. In theoretical terms, a lot of this activity could be said to be inspired by Amartya Sen’s pioneering work on agency, rights and capabilities and in historical terms can be seen to date from the period Sen initiated this work across the globe (Ibid, 40).

One of the important characteristic features of this type is its critical and interrogative nature. At the extreme end this may initiate a radical restructuring of the system or invariably, a complete removal of it. Shah termed it as “counter-hegemony” in a classical Gramscian sense. The fourth type in his categorization is known as *engaging the state and leveraging the market*. According to him this is the most recent and also “creative and effective” civil society action in India. This type of action acknowledges the critiques offered by the third type of activists and based on that these activists fight for the rights of the citizens. Here the action is not intended to overthrow the existing state; instead, it attempts to make the state more effective, efficient and functioning particularly for the poor. The basic reason is that this type of action has a strong conviction in the potentiality of the state and therefore they believe that “with all its flaws, the state in India remains potentially a protector of the marginalized” (Ibid, 40). That being the case, here one of the important aims of this action is to transform the current state into “working the state”. In order to validate this argument, Shah provides so many examples for the active involvement and the positive results of this action in the recent Indian context. This includes: Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) – according to him, this organization



evolved from type 3 to 4 – which was launched in rural Rajasthan and later involved in designing national level rural welfare and development programmes; similarly, it includes historic pieces of legislation such as the Right to Information Act, National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and Forest Rights Act (FRA) under UPA-I regime. And further, the Right to Education (RTE) Act and the National Food Security Act (NFSA) under the rule UPA-II are another set of examples. Thus, he says that this type of civil society action has also engaged with markets in the recent past. The basic purpose is to constitute powerful corporate institutions of the poor particularly, women to resist the massive exploitation of the small and marginal farmers by the mainstream markets. For him, federation of women SHGs and producer companies are the examples of this intervention (Ibid, 41).

All these discussions offer great insights into the state-society relationship in India in the postcolonial condition, particularly in the last three decades and thereby intensify the framing of a postcolonial political sociology. Kaviraj (2001) insightfully argued that (by considering the conditions until 1980s) contrary to Europe we did not have a strong civil society. Later, by assessing the larger economic and political changes in the last three decades, Chatterjee observed that civil society in India is principally an urban space which mainly constituted by the urban middle class and in that space a capitalist class has established its moral-political hegemony. However, I perceive all the above described ideas on civil society including Gramsci's original thoughts and further interpretations indeed have great validity in the present context. Now we will make an attempt to analytically examine the descriptions on the relationship between NGOs and adivasi communities in Kerala and particularly in Wayanad.

### ***Solidarity and HiLDA as Civil Society Organisations***

Although these two NGOs – Solidarity and HiLDA – did not explicitly articulate anything on civil society, it is possible to derive certain meaning on civil society from their discourses. Thus, I argue that in the activities of both Solidarity and HiLDA one could identify the dual functions of civil society as Gramsci explained. Some of their strategies and modalities such as conscientisation, education, intellectual resources and literacy were all efforts to create a new consciousness among adivasis. In other words these vigorous and determined endeavours visualized a transition of adivasis as ‘population’ to responsible ‘citizens’. They recognized that adivasis were not enjoying any citizenship rights although they were also rhetorically considered as citizens under the legal and constitutional framework. On the one hand these two NGOs made a plea to protect and promote the art and culture of adivasis as a community and on the other hand, they looked at them as ‘people’ who do not know much about citizenship and constitutional rights. It contains a discourse on community as well as citizenship. In the conceptualization of Western political thought, the category community does not have a place in the notion on citizenship. Similarly, here these two NGOs also make a division between community and citizenship. Consequently, art and culture located in the domain of community and citizenship was located in connection with the modern state. However, different from other mainstream NGOs their strategy has some value. Like many viewpoints, they also believed that education can play a vital role in the social and economic transformation of adivasis. But their educational ideas were largely influenced by the educational philosophy of Paulo Freire. He believed that:

What I have been proposing from my political convictions, my philosophical convictions, is a profound respect for the total autonomy of the educator. What I have been proposing is a profound respect for the cultural identity of students-a cultural identity that implies respect for the language of the other, the color of the other, the gender of the other, the class of the other, the sexual orientation of the other, the intellectual capacity of the other; that implies the ability to stimulate the creativity of the other. But these things take place in a social and historical con-text and not in pure air. These things take place in history and I, Paulo Freire, am not the owner of history (Freire 1997, 307-308).

Hence, the activists of those NGOs respected the cultural identity and autonomy of the adivasis. This is one of the basic reasons to adopt conscientisation as a strategy and modality to work among adivasis. By following this, they believed that the present consciousness of adivasis was not adequate to understand the root causes of their suffering and the gravity of their current exploitation, and therefore it was necessary to inculcate a critical consciousness among them. Indeed, it was not intended to take up the issues of adivasis for them or represent them; instead, the purpose was to equip them to take up their own issues and to encourage them to speak for themselves. These approaches were different from the earlier approaches of the mobilisations. Along these lines, it was true that it opened a space for the people like Janu to acquaint with modern education by maintaining a strong belief in their tradition. As Jose Sebastian opined<sup>59</sup>, Janu was an illiterate when she associated with them and later she learnt alphabets as part of their non-formal educational programme. Subsequently, she became one of the coordinators of their literacy programme. As part of it she got an opportunity to visit various adivasi *oorukal* (settlements) and she used these visits not only to teach but also as a platform to understand the predicaments of adivasis and the root causes of current deprivation and marginality. However, in no sense I am arguing that this was the only

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<sup>59</sup> Earlier I have made the verbatim record of this observation (See p. 17).

way in which her leadership was being shaped but it had played an important role in the making of her as an adivasi activist. Before associating with Solidarity she was a member of Kerala State Karshaka Thozhilali Union (KSKTU)<sup>60</sup> and she continued in it as a campaigner until 1987 even after starting to associate with Solidarity. This experience too has helped her to organize and lead the adivasis later.

Thus I observe that the approaches of Solidarity and HiLDA, as two different NGOs at the beginning, involved certain limited elements of a radical or counter hegemonic civil society action. This can also be categorized under the second type of civil society actions – developmental NGOs – offered by Shah, however, a close examination would unravel the fact that this is not completely free from orientalist perspective. It exemplifies their division and location of adivasi art and culture in the traditional domain and citizenship and constitutional rights in the domain of modern. In other words, it again reinforces a tradition/modern dichotomy.

### ***South Indian Adivasi Sangamam and SZAF***

Let me now return to the discussion on *South Indian Adivasi Sangamam*<sup>61</sup> which was held at Wayanad in 1992 and explore how it helped to posit the adivasi land question in the public sphere of Kerala. As I noted earlier adivasi *Sangamam* was organized by the adivasis with the support of NGOs particularly, Solidarity and HiLDA in Wayanad. They consistently encouraged and supported adivasis to join together and discuss their issues, particularly the question of land. As part of it they helped the adivasi leaders such as C K Janu, Shankar and Kumar to visit Jharkhand and northern part of India to get exposed to

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<sup>60</sup> KSKTU is a union of agricultural labourers started by the Communist Party of India Marxist.

<sup>61</sup> Sangamam refers gathering.

the places where adivasis predominantly inhabited. Later, also in the backdrop of these experiences they decided to organize a south Indian adivasi *Sangamam* at Wayanad. As part of it they decided to restrict the membership and volunteer positions only for adivasis. In the first organizing committee meeting of the *Sangamam* held on 19 July, 1992 they took a decision that this must be an adivasi event. Thus, only adivasis must be delegates to the national colloquium that has been planned as part of this *Sangamam*. Then they also decided that “while NGOs would have a role, it would be in the background and restricted to support” (Cheria et al. 1997, 67). Their report accounted that:

On 19 July 1992, *Adivasi Aikya Samithy* in Bathery Taluk, *Adivasi Vikasana Pravarthaka Samithy* in the Mananthavady and Vythiri Taluks of Wayanad, Kerala, *Paniya Samajam* and *Kuruma Samudaya Samraksha Samithy* in Kerala, *Adivasi Munnetra Sangam* in Gudalur Taluk of Nilgiri District of Tamilnadu, *Budakattu Krishikara Sangha* and *Soliga Abhivridhi Sangha* in the Kodagu and Mysore districts of Karnataka came together and decided to jointly organize the first meeting of adivasis in the south and call it the ‘*Adivasi Sangamam*’ (Ibid, p. 67).

At that point in time C K Janu was working with *Adivasi Vikasana Pravarthaka Samithy* and she was assigned the responsibility to chair the organizing committee. This was an eight day programme which comprised of a national colloquium, various sessions unveiling the conditions of adivasis in south Indian states such as Kerala, Karnataka and Tamilnadu, cultural festivals, exhibition and mass cultural procession. The organizers claimed that around 1200 adivasis from 35 different organizations belonging to 11 states and 40 communities participated in the *Sangamam*. As per the report, “the *Adivasi Sangamam* was the confluence of aspirations and articulations of the adivasis of this land to survive as a distinct people with an ecological world view and culture” (Ibid, 69).

In the National Colloquium organized as part of the Adivasi *Sangamam* the prominent adivasi scholars and activists such as Dr. Ram Dayal Munda, former vice-Chancellor of Ranchi university and a Jharkhand leader; Luingan Luithui, secretary-general of the Asia Indigenous People's Pact had presented papers. In the end, the *Sangamam* adopted some resolutions and recommendations based on group wise discussions and regional presentations under seven major heads which are, culture and identity, forest, land, development, employment, political and administrative and short term (Cheria et al. 1997, 80-81).

I conclude this sub-section by summarizing the major arguments in the following. In this section, I examined the relationship between NGOs and adivasi community and their land question in the 1980s and early 1990s in Kerala. Here I located NGOs as civil society organisations by acknowledging the fact that the category, civil society is a contested term in the domain of social science. However, I argue that most of the NGOs followed a mainstream development approach regarding the empowerment of adivasis. However, two NGOs named Solidarity and HiLDA played a crucial role in motivating the adivasis for acquiring land. Even though they emphasised the notion of autonomy and agency of the adivasis, they do not have deeper interests to eliminate the structures of domination which resulted in the marginality of adivasis in Wayanad. Hence the above two civil society organisations' engagement never advanced beyond 'cultural empathy'.<sup>62</sup> They also reinforced the dichotomy between community and citizenship by locating adivasi

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<sup>62</sup> The gesture 'cultural empathy' refers to a recognition and understanding of the various aspects of a culture which is different from one's own or the community one belongs to. Similarly, it ensures each culture is different in its own way.

culture, art and life in the domain of community and on the contrary citizenship in the domain of the modern state. Thus, one needs to see the contribution of Solidarity and HiLDA in a different perspective as their approach can be characterised as counter hegemonic civil society action. This can also be categorized under the second type of civil society actions – developmental NGOs – offered by Shah; however, a close examination would reveal that this is not completely free from the liberal and orientalist perspective. It exemplifies their division and location of adivasi art and culture in the traditional domain and citizenship and constitutional rights in the domain of modern. In other words, it again reinforces a tradition/modern and also community/citizenship dichotomy. Indeed, the activities of South Indian Adivasi Forum and SZAF exemplify the preliminary efforts to break the non-adivasi representations of adivasis even though they received financial aid and other supports from NGOs to organise these adivasi *sangamams* (gatherings).

### **Catch Hold of Land: Adivasi Agitations in the 1990s**

1990s marked three important land grab agitations: *Ambukuthi*, *Cheengeri* and *Panavalli* agitations, which were undertaken mainly under the leadership of C K Janu as predecessor to the formation of AGMS. These agitations were chiefly led by Janu and it helped greatly to shape and strengthen her leadership quality further as an adivasi leader and social movement activist. All these agitations happened in the Wayanad district of Kerala. A non-political party collective organised a public meeting on January 26, 1994 in Kalpetta, the district headquarters of Wayanad district. In that meeting, adivasis declared that they will occupy the land which actually belonged to adivasis because the government was completely inattentive to the plight of adivasis and was also not willing

to execute the existing laws and court judgments which promised ownership right for adivasis over land. Subsequently, the joint action committee under the leadership of C K Janu took some significant efforts and protests to capture the land. In the beginning, the method of agitation was very peaceful and democratic such as picketing the government offices and sit-in (*dharna*) in front of the various state institutions etc. But the government did not pay much attention to these peaceful agitations and also suppressed the agitation by using their power. This is the historical context in which adivasis initiated forceful occupation of land in three different places of Wayanad which I briefly describe below.

### ***Ambukuthi Agitation***

The members of Adivasi development working committee encroached into the 128 acres of reserved forest in Ambukuthi, a place at Mananthawady in Wayanad district on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1994. There were around 130 migrated non-adivasi families residing in the forest area with the support of forest officials. In that context, 220 landless adivasi families encroached into that forest area, occupied 67.5 acres of land and built their huts. Subsequently, in a joint action of the police and forest department, officials removed all the huts constructed by the adivasis on 6<sup>th</sup> April. Then they arrested 317 adivasis and charged cases against 133 of them. The rest of them were released on the same day. In the next day, a significant number of adivasis led a protest march to the police station and revenue division office demanding the release of adivasis who were arrested by the police and also demanding the allocation of land to the adivasi families who occupied the forest land at Ambukuthi. The women started a relay hunger strike and demanded to provide land rights to the adivasis. Later, when adivasis realised that the authorities would not



take any favourable decisions in giving land rights, they again occupied the land and rebuilt the huts in that land. In the meantime, the congress led UDF government under the chief ministership of K Karunakaran announced that they are planning to bring an ordinance in the assembly to address the difficulties in implementing the Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction of Transfer of Lands and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Act, 1975. However, they continued the hunger strike and finally, they called off the strike on the basis of an assurance given by the district collector to resolve the issues at the earliest.

### ***Cheengeri Struggle***

Cheengeri is a place located around 53 km away from the district headquarters at Kalpetta in Wayanad district. The first democratically elected government after the formation of the state under the chief ministership of E M S Namboodirippad started the Cheengeri Adivasi Rehabilitation Project in 1957. As part of this project they bought 526 acres of land from Madras state by utilizing tribal funds. The basic aim of this project was to develop it as a coffee plantation in 5 years of time and then give each adivasi family 5 acres of land after 5 years. Unfortunately, it did not happen until 1994. In the meanwhile, around 182 acres of project land were handed over to agriculture department to promote agriculture. In this context, South Zone Adivasi Forum (SZAF) announced that adivasis under the banner of Adivasi Unity Committee will retain the alienated adivasi land. In continuation of this decision, adivasis entered into the project land on 25 January, 1995. Around 250 families settled in almost 100 acres of land. But the government and mainstream political parties strongly opposed the act of adivasis. A large

number of adivasis including women and children were arrested by the police. Then they were kept under the police custody for more than ten days and later released.

### ***Panavalli Land Struggle***

Adivasis started another land grab agitation at Panavalli in Thirunelli panchayat of Wayanad district on March 5, 1995. 76 adivasi families occupied 18 acres of reserved forest and started agricultural activities. But forest department strongly opposed this agitation. On April 3, 1995 forest officials with the help of police evicted and arrested more than 100 encroachers in which 26 were children below 5 years. Then they were remanded by the police for 15 days. They came back and reoccupied the same land and built the huts again. Both the government and political parties strongly opposed the method of agitation by the adivasis. Adivasis tried to forcefully occupy the land several times as government was totally indifferent towards their demands.

In terms of outcome, these agitations cannot be considered as a great success; however, it indicated the gravity of situation particularly the issue of adivasi land alienation and landlessness to the public domain. Similarly, it also unraveled the failure of government projects in rehabilitating landless adivasis. Another distinctive characteristic feature that must be noted here is that all these agitations were organised entirely by adivasis with an adivasi leadership. Indeed, this growing independent and collective agency of adivasis can be linked with the larger consciousness offered by the mobilisations of the dalits and adivasis across the country in the 1990s. As I mentioned earlier, these three agitations greatly shaped the leadership quality and capacity of C K Janu. This also equipped her

with organising skills and oratory competence which significantly contributed in the formation of AGMS later.

### **Discourses around Land: Transcending the Tradition/Modern Dichotomy**

An attempt has been made to trace the history of adivasi land alienation here. These inquiries indicated that adivasi land question had received an unprecedented attention and significance at the level of state governance and also in the public sphere of Kerala in the beginning of this century. Why did it obtain an unparalleled importance as a socio-political issue in the new historical and political context and how has it acquired that prominence in the present society? Attempts to answer these questions invariably led to looking at the contribution of AGMS in constructing the new discourses on adivasi land as part of their movement activism. Therefore, this section will examine the content and essential attributes that constituted the discourse within/by AGMS on land. What did adivasis articulate in the name of land question? Is it different from the meaning attributed to land by the in-migrant peasants as well as the non-tribal? If it is different, how can we illustrate the difference through the discourses on land constructed within/by the movement? This section attempts to answer these questions through an examination of the discourse<sup>63</sup> which includes all kinds of articulations such as statements, opinions

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<sup>63</sup> Here the term discourse has been used as a concept following the post-Marxist theory of discourse developed by Laclau and Mouffe. According to Laclau, discourse is a “structure in which meaning is constantly negotiated and constructed” (1988, 254). Howarth and Stavrakakis (2000) write, “discourse theory assumes that all objects and actions are meaningful, and that their meaning is conferred by historically specific systems of rules” (2). According to them, each discourse is a “social and political construction that establishes a system of relations between different objects and practices, while providing (subject) positions with which social agents can identify” (Ibid, 3).

and observations on the theme land by the social actors associated with AGMS. Similarly, the documents like manifesto, charter of demands, pamphlets, articles published by the leaders of the movement in vernacular daily newspapers and various magazines that revealed their collective decisions and collective framing of the adivasi land question has been examined as part of this effort. Thus this section analyses by following the method of *discourse analysis*.<sup>64</sup>

C K Janu, the leader of AGMS articulated the plight of landless adivasis in the following words. She says:

Adivasis are the real owners of land. Our land was snatched away from us. None of the political parties which came to power in the state took any serious initiative to return the land back to the real owners. Adivasis and dalits were nowhere in the picture of the policies of the government. We were always neglected. Even within last four months [December 2004 to March 2005] four adivasis died in different parts of Thiruvananthapuram district and there was no land to bury their body as per our tradition. In two such incidents, the body has been buried in the kitchen of their hutments itself. In another occasion, we buried the body of an Adivasi in another one's land.<sup>65</sup>

In the context of this narration, it is interesting to examine what Janu meant by 'real owners of land'? How do we explain the notion of ownership? In fact, Janu's perception of 'real ownership' attempts to historicise adivasi and forest land issue and through which she reinforces the fact that adivasis enjoyed customary rights over forest land,

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<sup>64</sup> *Discourse analysis* "refers to the practice of analyzing empirical raw materials and information as discursive forms" (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000, 4). Here I follow their view on discourse analysis and as per this method "discourse analysts treat a wide range of linguistic and non-linguistic data – speeches, reports, manifestos, historical events, interviews, policies, ideas, even organizations and institutions – as 'texts' or 'writing'" (p. 40). Therefore, in this context, "empirical data are viewed as sets of signifying practices that constitute a "discourse" and its "reality", thus providing the conditions which enable subjects to experience the world of objects, words and practices (p. 4).

<sup>65</sup> This is taken from an Interview with C K Janu by Jaison Chacko and Subhash Gatade titled *No Land Even for Burial* published at <http://www.countercurrents.org/tribal-janu230305.htm> March 23, 2005.

particularly in the pre-colonial period. We need a certain sense of historical knowledge about adivasis' relations with land and property to exactly understand the meaning of Janu's claim over land by invoking a distant past.

Moorkoth (2013) brilliantly explored the historical relationship of adivasi groups with property and ownership in Kerala in the context of adivasi land politics and argued that our present conception of property is dominated by modern theories of development. Thus, she argues that these modern development-oriented notions of property and ownership<sup>66</sup> are insufficient in understanding adivasis' relations with land, including "heterogeneous land relations" which existed in the past inscribed by culture and traditions (6). Following this argument, when we try to look at Janu's commentary, it might be possible to assume that she was referring to the life of adivasis and their relations to land in Kerala society in the long historical past, by using the metaphor 'real owners of land'. This observation can be validated through a British document from the colonial period. The Proceedings of the Board of Revenue (hereafter PBR) stated on 5 August 1871:

There is scarcely a forest in the whole of the Presidency of Madras which is not within the limits of some village, and there is not one in which, so far as the Board can ascertain, the state asserted any rights of property, unless royalties in teak, sandalwood, cardamoms, and the like, can be considered as such, until very recently. **All of them, without exception, are subject to tribal or communal rights which have existed from time immemorial**, and which are as difficult to define and value as they are necessary to the rural population...**the forests are, and always have been, common property**, no restriction except that of taxes, like the Muturpha and Pulari, was ever imposed on the people till the Forest Department was created, and such taxes

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<sup>66</sup> Moorkoth rightly observes that in the dominant property-ownership model "property and property rights are regarded as a consensual process that involves rational individuals and as a result a causal relationship is assumed between legal rights and property (2013, 7).

no more indicate that the forests belong to the state (Emphasis is mine, PBR, No. 3284, 5 August 1871).

From the above observation it is clear that some of the British colonial officers acknowledged the fact that forest land belongs to adivasis and communal rights was a predominant form of ownership existed from time immemorial. Looking into the formations of early south Indian society, Gurukkal (2010), attempted to understand the place of tribes and forests in the context of that social formation.<sup>67</sup> He reconstructed this history by examining ancient Tamil heroic poems as a source material along with “...label inscriptions, foreign notices, and numismatic materials” (2010, 122). In his view, the distinction between *Katu* (forest land) and *Natu* (human inhabited land) as two different entities on the basis of mutually contradictory qualities did not exist during this period. Therefore, he argues that this contradictory notion which separates *Katu* and *Natu* developed only in the latter period. It clearly shows that the idea of forest did not exist outside their life rather it was an inevitable part of their life. Subsequently, when it comes to the medieval history of Kerala it is noticeable that the circumstances have changed.

Ganesh, another noted historian of Kerala examined the growth of traditional land rights in Kerala for more than two centuries beginning from 16<sup>th</sup> to the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (later medieval period), prior to British occupancy. This essay, focused on the transitions that happened in the agrarian society of Kerala, is particularly concerned with the ownership and control of land during this period. He observed that “the traditional land system in Kerala has been called *janmi-kudiyan sampradayam* or *janmam-kanam-*

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<sup>67</sup> The historical period he mainly focused was pre-Pallavan period in the Tamil region (part of modern south India) which constituted the “closing centuries of the first millennium BC to about the AD fifth century” (Gurukkal, 2010, 121).

*maryadai*. These terms generally denote landlord-tenant relations, but an explanation of their nature depend on the interpretation of the terms *janmi*, *kudiyar* and *maryadai*” (1991, 300). According to him, hierarchy or ranking of rights over land had emerged by 12<sup>th</sup> century AD in Kerala. In terms of this hierarchy, *naduvazhi* (ruler or chieftain) is at the top, then *uralar* (land owners and temple trustees), followed by *karalar* (tenants and intermediary landholders), *kudiyar* (settled tenant cultivators) and finally *adiyar* (bonded labourers) located at the lowest strata of this hierarchy. Indeed, caste system in Kerala was built on this hierarchy. But surprisingly there was no mention about adivasis or forest dwellers in this hierarchical classification. In the case of Malabar region, Ganesh observed that large scale expansion of cultivation did not happen compared to the other region (Travancore) because of its geographical peculiarities (Malabar as a region was full of “hills and valleys and elevated regions...”). Therefore, he writes, “Even by the end of the eighteenth century more than two-thirds of the land surface in North Malabar was filled with forests” (Ibid, 319).<sup>68</sup> In the light of this discussion, it could be observed that adivasi life and their traditional and customary rights over forest did not interrupt the external agencies and other people to a great extent until the latter half of 18<sup>th</sup> century. Similarly, Kunhaman (1989) revealed that until the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Wayanad was inhabited by different hill tribes in separate geographical divisions ruled by adivasi chieftains. Therefore, Janu’s expression – real owners/ownership – finds its meaning and validity in reference to this long historical trajectory of the societal transformations in

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<sup>68</sup> Wayanad, Kannur and Kozhikode districts constitute the North-Malabar region of modern Kerala and in which, as we have already seen, Wayanad has highest number of adivasi population.

South India. However, this is not the way in which modern idea of ownership has been regarded, understood and interpreted.

Similarly, the movement articulated an important democratic right in the form of a popular slogan which is as follows: “We have the right to live on the land where we are born and to live in the same land until our death”. In another occasion, both Janu and Geethanandan, leaders of the AGMS stated that “land as a resource” and “we want to establish power over resources”.<sup>69</sup> I perceive that these identifications with land by the movement and its leaders indicate their imagination of ownership over land. Land is not merely a dwelling place rather it is considered as a productive agricultural land. In other words, even when they claim for private ownership of land, these claims are being articulated in a communitarian manner. The conceptual notion of private land ownership is understood and interpreted by the state only in modern legal sense. Thus, within the discourse of private land ownership, the simplest meaning of ownership refers to an individual’s or citizen’s exclusive control over land but in a sociological conception of property rights, “ownership involves socially recognized economic rights” (Carruthers and Ariovich 2004, 23). Therefore, I argue that eventually the adivasis wanted to establish socially recognized economic rights over land and they (AGMS) rightly recognize that this would be a precondition to break the existing social and economic inequality. Hence, when they demanded for land they imagined a new and modern relationship to land which was totally absent in the formal discourses on land articulated mainly through the non-adivasi organizations by making a passive participation of adivasis.

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<sup>69</sup> Interviews with C K Janu and M Geethanandan on 5<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> January, 2008 respectively.



Likewise, it is germane to look at the conceptions of “land as resource” and “...power over land” more carefully. Adivasis used forest as a traditional resource for various agricultural and subsistence activities like slash-and-burn agriculture, cattle grazing, hunting and collecting forest products since long time before the arrival of colonial rulers. But the British completely changed the meaning of land and forest and identified them as commercial resources as part of their capitalist restructuring of the economy. It was a collective effort which combines people from different disciplinary and administrative backgrounds and thus, as Philip rightly pointed out, “the links between foresters, geographers, planters, missionaries, and ethnographers reveal intersecting discourses that sustained colonial natural– and human– resource policies” (2004, 21). Often, postcolonial state also continued similar natural resource policies and denied the customary rights of adivasis over land and other resources. Given this historical understanding, when they articulate “land as resource” in the contemporary context it could be argued that this is an attempt to reestablish their rights over natural resources by using the legal and constitutional provisions. In this counter discourse of AGMS against the dominant discourse in relation to resource exploitation, the term ‘power’ has been carefully chosen by them to institute their modern rights over natural resources. Here, the term power envisages a community’s culturally, economically and politically legitimate control over land and other natural resources.

Similarly, I argue that they envision a new notion of development when they put forward the claim for five acres of land to each landless adivasi family. Here land is primarily conceived as an economic category in order to begin the cultivation to ensure their sustainable livelihood. Unlike the traditional practices of shifting cultivation and

gathering of forest products, they wanted to set up settled agriculture among adivasis by acquiring five acres of land. This imagination of an agrarian economy gives prime importance to food crops and its cultivation and may resist the market driven capitalist agrarian production which does not consider ecology and environmental aspects. Consequently, the AGMS' claim for five acres encompasses an attempt to negotiate with the existing power and authority, which is still largely determined by the ownership over land. Thus, one could interpret the agitation for five acres of land more as a political battle for alternative 'development' of adivasis, which encompasses the idea of ownership and control of land as an important economic, cultural and political resource.

When the government failed to carry out the promises made in the agreement between AGMS and the state government, a large number of adivasis and their families occupied the Muthanga Wild Life Sanctuary in Wayanad district in January 2003. They entered into the Wild Life Sanctuary by making the claim that 'forest should be handed over to its real owners'. C K Janu, the leader of the agitation recollected about it in the following words:

We found six sacred groves here [in Muthanga Forest] which exist before the declaration of it as a Wild Life Sanctuary. We performed *bhoomi puja* (land worship) before we entered and began to stay in this place and as part of it around 1500 families had prepared for *gothra puja* (clan worship). Our plan was to make it a real forest by reciting *pazham pattu* (folk songs) and *pazhamkatha* (folk tales).<sup>70</sup>

In these expressions they proclaimed a different type of relationship with the forest land. These proclamations are predicated on certain notions of sacredness informed by adivasi tradition and culture. Thus, the crucial question is how do we make sense of these

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<sup>70</sup> Interview with Ms. C K Janu, 25 May, 2009.

cultural expressions? Can we look at it as an attempt to reclaim and revitalize adivasis' indigenous tradition and culture to address the question of land in the present context? Or is it a strategic move of AGMS as a social movement to re-assert adivasi tradition and culture in order to articulate their primary aim of achieving land and forest rights in a new fashion? We have already seen that land, particularly adivasi land has been a site of contestation in Kerala ever since the colonial period. The colonial rule epistemically constructed a modern/tradition binary and also sacred/profane dichotomy with reference to the category land. Consequently, their idea of land as *modern* was constructed by a discursive terrain in opposition to adivasis' conception of land as *sacred* and *traditional*. Therefore, it is a fact that the very idea of land had been bound up with the project of colonial modernity.

In the trajectory of sociology, classical sociologist Durkheim was the pioneer who explored the theme *sacred* and *profane* as part of his attempt to build a theory of religion and society. For him, sacred was a defining feature of religion and he discussed about sacredness in connection with Christian church. Therefore, he believed that sacred is ideal and transcends everyday existence. Thus in his classic work *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* he writes:

Whether simple or complex, all known religious beliefs display a common feature: They presuppose a classification of the real or ideal things that men conceive of into two classes—two opposite genera—that are widely designated by two distinct terms, which the words *profane* and *sacred* translate fairly well. The division of the world into two domains, one containing all that is sacred and the other all that is profane—such is the distinctive trait of religious thought. Beliefs, myths, dogmas, and legends are either representations or systems of representations that express the nature of sacred things, the virtues and powers attributed to them, their history, and their relationships with one another as well as with profane things (1995, 34).

By making this binary between sacred and profane Durkheim points out the importance of ‘sacred’ in human beings’ cultural life. Thus, sacred plays a crucial role in shaping the everyday life of the people. Here, the reference to Durkheim while talking about the adivasi notion of ‘sacred’ is not to argue that Durkheim has simply equated the idea of sacred with uncivilized. According to Durkheim, religion “*is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them*” (Ibid, 44, Italics in original). In which I am taking the notion of “things set apart and forbidden” to explain the idea of sacred and sacredness with reference to adivasi life and culture. More importantly, the larger point which I would like to articulate is that, even though Durkheim’s original ideas concerning the sacred did not attempt to equate sacred with uncivilized and non-modern, *sacred* was often associated with irrational beliefs, uncivilized rituals and broadly non-modern practices as part of the historical transition of modernity. Similarly, sacred is considered as a terrain in opposition to profane or secular which is part of an enlightened and educated modern society. But I find it very difficult and insufficient to explain the notion of sacredness articulated by the movement in connection with forest land by using this binary. In other words, the idea of sacred in sacred grove invented and articulated by the movement from the cultural practices of adivasi communities cannot be located strictly in a religious framework. Adivasis were historically not part of Hinduism as a religious domain and thus the idea of sacredness in connection with sacred grove as a folk tradition existed much before the consolidation of Hindu religion. Therefore, the explanation of sacred as a constitutive aspect of religion that we have seen in Durkheimian theory is insufficient to

explain the idea of sacred grove. On the other hand, the observation made by Alexander, a neo-Durkheimian contemporary American sociologist, that “to be sacred, an object must be sharply separated from contact with the routine world” is equally problematic (2003, 187).

A strict compartmentalisation between routine world, which I prefer to call as everyday life of adivasis, and the domain of sacred/sacredness seems very difficult. Often, sacredness plays a crucial role or an underlying impetus in shaping the everyday life of the adivasis in the past and it is a fact that this has been slowly declining. But it is true that “objects are isolated because they are thought to possess mysterious power” (Ibid, 188). In this context, it is worth mentioning about Jency Moorkoth’s observation about the term ‘sacred’ with reference to adivasi life and culture. She rightly pointed out that the term sacred “demands a methodological clarification”. She made an attempt to delineate the difference in the depiction of sacred in two different sources such as “colonial archives and popular narratives and stories collected from adivasis”. In her view, “unless otherwise specified, the term “sacred” used with regard to the tribal communities denotes the complex nexus of gods, ancestors, ghosts and supernatural. In other places it is used as an extension of divine” (2012, 11, fn. 20). Therefore, adivasis believe that a faithful worshipping of these gods, ancestors, ghosts and supernatural, in other words the sacred forces, is an inevitable practice which ensures all kinds of well being and prosperity. But this tradition had been declining when they were alienated from their land as a result of multiple factors discussed earlier. This is the historical and cultural context in which AGMS powerfully captured the notion of sacred from the past to establish a complete ownership over land. Here the meaning of land cannot be reduced

as merely a dwelling place or economic resource but envisioned as a cultural resource also. In short, it proposes a new politics over land which is deeply rooted in their cultural practices and life.

Certainly, invoking the tradition and past is a new approach adopted by many contemporary subaltern movements as an effective plan of action to problematise existing structures of domination. In this context, I find that the reinvention of sacred groves is an attempt to fight against the modern political practices of the state which partially or completely displaced the nature worshipping tradition of the adivasis. But one is not implying that tradition is a static entity; instead, it is a continuous process constructed by the movement. Veena Das points out that “the idea of tradition has many strands – one can see that in recent years it has become intertwined with notions of memory, invention and identity politics – giving it a life in many a scholarly treatise and in public culture” (1999, 9).

Interestingly, we have seen that AGMS as a contemporary social movement interrogated the hegemonic discourse on land which was constituted on the neat dichotomy between modern and tradition initially constructed by the British colonialists and historically continued without much alteration in the postcolonial period. Hence I argue that the trajectory of AGMS manifested the process of this interrogation and the construction of new discourses on land which transcends the binary between tradition and modern. The identification of AGMS with ‘land as a resource’ and the idea to ‘establish power over resources’ along with the sacredness of forest land presuppose a distinct modern imagination of ownership over land. In this imagination, land carries multiple meanings which can be explicated as a dwelling place, a site of agricultural production, a social and

cultural resource and capital and also in relation to the notions of private ownership. In short, when AGMS demanded land they imagined a new and multiple modes of relationship to land. In this multiple modes, certain proclamations are empirically grounded on adivasi culture and tradition.

I conclude this section by arguing that, invoking tradition and demanding five acres of land for each landless adivasi family constitutes a ‘discursive structure’ in a *Laclauian* sense. Therefore, the discourses on land within/by AGMS constructed a new and distinct modern imagination of land along with rearticulating the traditional notions of forest land. This distinct modern imagination creates a rupture from the paradigm of modern sociological theories – in which the categories of modern and tradition have been situated in antagonistic locations – and transcends modern/tradition dichotomy on land. In other words, a more complex and contingent configuration of tradition and modern entails in the ‘discursive structure’ of land constructed within/by the movement, AGMS through the above described discourses on land.

### **Agency of the Adivasis, Invocation of Community and AGMS**

Let me begin this section by recollecting a question raised by C K Janu when I met her for the first time in 2008 for an interview as part of this study. The question she asked was, “eventually you will get a research degree if I share all the information with you but what are we actually going to get as a community from your study”?<sup>71</sup> I did not have a proper answer to that question at that moment and the situation is not much different even now also. Besides, I know that my study may not offer any direct benefit or help to the

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<sup>71</sup> Interview with Ms. C K Janu, 25 May, 2009.

community since this is an attempt to analyse the adivasi movement and its trajectory. Later when I revisited the above narrated question more than once as part of the study, every time it reminded me that it speaks a lot about agency of the adivasis than a mere objection. Therefore, the main focus of this section is to understand the notion of adivasi agency developed as part of the movement AGMS. Along the line of conceptual notion of agency which I explicated in the introduction chapter (see p. 36-39), this section will attempt to offer many instances to validate and strengthen that conceptualisation of adivasi agency.

From this vantage point Joseph K Job's observation on adivasis' consciousness on rights seems very problematic.<sup>72</sup> As a response to one of my questions, he observed that "they [adivasis] have not acquired a social and political consciousness on their rights even now". This observation implied a predominant notion on agency which constituted the basis of a Western liberal framework. Perhaps, they are not talking about their right to land in the language informed by a constitutional and legal framework when we approach and talk to them individually; however, it does not mean that they are not conscious about their rights.

In a joint article published in the Madyamam weekly, a popular Malayalam magazine Janu and Geethanandan write:

White people believed that black people and their class did not have soul. Some academicians and intellectuals associated with forest department also believed that adivasis did not have agency. Some people in Kerala still believe that adivasis are forest dwellers like that of elephant, tiger and Indian gaur.

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<sup>72</sup> Interview with Dr. Joseph K Job, 26 January 2008. He was an assistant professor in the department of Malayalam at St. Mary's College, Mananthavady in Wayanad district and extensively written on adivasis in popular Malayalam magazines.



This perception has been shared by the people like Westerners, foreign funded agencies, developmentalists who had introduced funded development projects, pure or essential environmentalists, and hindutva organisations at different levels. All these people and groups wanted to integrate adivasis to the ‘mainstream’ of the society in terms of protecting forest and wild animals. Their environmentalism is built on the hatredness towards fellow beings. No human beings, wild animals and nature have been protected as part of their development projects. The remaining empty hillocks (*motta kunnu*) and the adivasis alienated from the Muthanga forest regions are aftermaths of these development projects and the ideology surrounding it. ‘AHADS’<sup>73</sup> model is their last word for tribal development. Ultimately, crores of rupees acquiring through foreign loan is the chief motivation for them to talk about human agency. This is the main factor through the criminal/mafia culture reproduces in Kerala. In this context, the collective nature implied in the *gothra jeevitham* (clan life) of adivasis has a huge possibility to develop a new notion on agency. They could recreate the nature and environment if they are allowed to reinvent their rhythm of life without any impediments. In fact, Muthanga was an important step taken by the adivasis in this direction (2003, 25).

This narration explains their perception on adivasi agency, community and identity. It is a critique of the dominant discourse on development and the question of agency implicit in it through which a new notion of agency is envisaged through the active mediation of the adivasi community life. Interestingly, here community life is equated as *gothra jeevitham* (clan life). It also indicates an uncritical acceptance of adivasi community and clan life as a solution and alternative to the devastating implications made on adivasi life as a result of the modernity’s development paradigm. In this context, I attempt to look at the invocations of community, identity and agency in the AGMS discourses by locating it in the historical continuity of a larger debate surrounding these themes which inaugurated the rise of ‘new’ social movements and identity politics in India since 1980s.

In early 2000, by introducing a collection of essays on community and identities Jodhka writes, “in the contemporary social sciences, culture has come to acquire the status of a

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<sup>73</sup> AHADS stands for Attappady Hill Area Development Society started by the government of Kerala in Palakkad district in 1995. Attappady is predominantly an adivasi populated area and this project was originally aimed at the eco-restoration and tribal empowerment mainly aided by Japan.

‘paradigm’, a ‘framework’ within which debates are carried out on the most compelling questions of contemporary politics” (2001, 13). According to him, ‘community’ and ‘identity’ are the two key categories which are often used and deployed in this new framework (Ibid, 14). Later, while looking into the relationship between community and social sciences he attempted to capture the changing meaning of community in the long historical trajectory of social sciences. My purpose here is not to trace the entire debate on community since colonial anthropology instead I mainly focus on the debate on community and identity in the post 1990s. While spelling out the broader theoretical framework (postcolonial political sociology) in the beginning of this study I spent a considerable amount of space to discuss about Partha Chatterjee’s idea of political and civil society. In a similar vein, one could see that Partha Chatterjee and Ashis Nandy who proposed a nuanced notion on community in the last three decades. By way of problematising the linear and evolutionist social transformation embedded in the liberal Western political theory and academia, Chatterjee precisely pointed out how the notion of ‘community’ has been conceived by them. According to him:

Community is viewed as ‘the relic of pre-modern tradition and large, universalistic and impersonal political identity as the hallmark of modernity. Guided by this modernising propensity, much of the recent history of the non-Western societies has been written as a progressivist narrative of the evolution from small, local and primordial community attachment to large, secular solidarities such as the nation (1998, p. 278).

In another sense both Janu and Geethanandan problematised the same project of Western modernity – unraveled by Chatterjee in the above passage – through their own observations based on their experiences narrated earlier. Further, Janu’s and Geethanandan’s expression bear some resonance to Nandy’s theoretical project which tenaciously critiqued the cultural and physical violence made on Indian tradition, culture

and community through Westernisation in India. In this project, coined as ‘critical traditionalism’<sup>74</sup> in Nandy’s own terms (2004), he consistently defended the idea of ‘traditional community’. Thus, “Nandy argues that the project of development and secularism brought with it the callous impersonality and massification of market-driven societies which destroyed age-old institutions of sociability and community-living without putting anything in their place” (Cited in Jodhka 2001, 23). In the backdrop of this observation if we go back to the instances of sacred groves which I discussed in the previous section, it shows how this “age-old institutions of sociability and community” had been destroyed in the past. However, if we take the history of AGMS in its totality we can find that the approach towards the past is not a linear and uncomplicated one but often it has an ambiguous relation to the past. Therefore, this understanding always challenges the simplistic binary between tradition and modern to understand the positions of the movement especially towards adivasi community and culture.

I argue that this invocation of adivasi community as part of movement activism does not exactly match to a pre-given and fixed primordial community; instead it demonstrates a “conscious mobilisation of cultural difference” (Appadurai 1997: 15) in terms of a

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<sup>74</sup> In different contexts Nandy certainly explains what his idea of critical traditionalism is. In two important occasions Nandy directly addresses this idea which I find very significant in the context of this study. In the first context he writes: “the critical traditionalism I am talking about does not have to see modern science as alien to it, even though it may see it as alienating...Such traditionalism uncompromisingly criticizes isolation and the over-concern with objectivity, but it never denies the creative possibilities of limited objectivity. Ultimately, intelligence and knowledge are poor – in fact, dangerous – substitutes for intellect and wisdom” (1987: 121 and 124). In another context, Nandy – in Chakrabarty’s language in a ‘decisionist’ fashion – observes: “critical traditionalism refers to the living traditions which include a theory of oppression, overt and/or covert. No Tradition is valid or useful for our times unless it has, or can be made to have, an awareness of the nature of evil in contemporary times” (2004, 21).

community in the making. The articulation of community at several moments in the trajectory of the movement clearly shows that this is not simply a reproduction of the already existed idea and practices of adivasi community. Further, following Hall's (1990) conceptualization of cultural identity, I argue that discourses of the movement around the idea of community attempt to go beyond the traditional as well as academic efforts to portray adivasi identity as that confined to an essentialised past. Often this past is characterised as an imperishable and enduring entity. Indeed, one could not discover a coherent image of a community at once rather a unified and organised image of a community can be derived from the discourses which emanated in the trajectory of the movement. Here a conscious attempt has been made to compile various aspects like claim for five acres of land, visualization of agricultural production on that land, recovery of cultural past and traditional practices in connection with that land along with the significance of the provisions offered in the constitutional and legal framework with reference to the community. This reconciliation of various aspects in the making of a modern adivasi community exemplifies the invocation of a distinct modernity.

Having said this, one can posit the question of adivasi agency not as a question of personal autonomy and individual determination rather visualized as collective phenomenon. This is apparently visible in the narration given below, which explains the stances of the adivasis who actively took part in the Muthanga agitation.<sup>75</sup> I met the

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<sup>75</sup> As a result of the refugee hut agitation under the auspices of AGMS, which I have discussed in the beginning of this chapter, government had promised five acres of land to the landless adivasis in Kerala. Though there was an agreement, government did not take any practical and administrative measures to accomplish the provisions offered in that agreement, mainly land allocation. This irresponsible and non-accountable approach of the government once again provoked adivasis and AGMS compelled to bring back

following persons who actively took part in the Muthanga agitation as part of my second phase (May-July, 2009) of field work. In which Kurukkan responded:

We must begin the agitation again. This is neither to steal anything nor a robbery but agitation for survival and life. We shall occupy the land again if the government is still not willing to allocate the guaranteed land. We had protested in front of the secretariat at Thiruvananthapuram for twenty-five days but there was no positive response from the part of the government. They are attempting to evade our demands and our request is please don't test our patience.<sup>76</sup>

Similarly, Santha Ramesan assertively said:

We will participate in the agitation again. It was our own decision to participate in the agitation. We must get land and there is no compromise in it. Currently we have been staying in the adivasi colonies where we don't have even limited space to engage in our day to day activities. We actually exasperated by experiencing the intimidation from the part of both politicians and police. How we can grow our daughters under these dreadful circumstances, she asked.<sup>77</sup>

Another respondent was Balan, he was in jail for two months in connection with Muthanga agitation. He said:

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to an agitate mode. Under these circumstances, they decided to occupy Muthanga wild life sanctuary under the banner of AGMS in the beginning of 2003. The Muthanga Wildlife Sanctuary which was established in 1973 with the objective of protecting the biological diversity of the region and is considered as one of the biggest natural habitats of Asiatic elephants. AGMS started the agitation on January 3, 2003 and around two hundred adivasi families were stood along with the agitation at the beginning. The activists had constructed temporary shelters at Thakarappady, Ponkuzhi and Ambukuthi inside the wildlife sanctuary. The agitation continued more than a month without making any great impact; however, the situation had dramatically changed on February 17, 2003 when they noticed fire inside the forest. Even though it was a mysterious forest fire appeared near the AGMS settlement, forest officials and police suspected the AGMS's activists responsible for it. Eventually it created a clash between AGMS activists and police personnel and ended up in a police firing and brutal suppression of the agitation on 19<sup>th</sup> of February. As a result of these incidents two deaths were reported in which one was an adivasi activist and the other was a police constable.

<sup>76</sup> Interview with Mr. Kurukkan, 22 May 2009.

<sup>77</sup> Interview with Mrs. Santha Ramesan, 1 June 2009.

Fear hasn't disappeared even now. The atrocities against adivasis who are staying in various colonies and involved in markets in the aftermath of Muthanga agitation was more shocking than the brutal attack of the police in the cell and jail. Our brothers and sisters stayed in the forest for so many days without food and water. They brutally harassed women and children. So many women were taken to I B office and ferociously abused by them in name of questioning. Seven months old daughter of Malu in the colony is also a martyr of this agitation. No media has reported these incidents. The poor adivasis are wandering for social justice by carrying the cases against them from one court to another court but on the other hand, the people (monsters) who had done all these brutalities are living peacefully. In this context, we must ask the question with the state, which side actually are you on?<sup>78</sup>

Another victim of the Muthanga agitation was K K Surendran, a faculty at District Institute of Education and Training (DIET), Sultan Bathery in Wayanad district also spoke about the adivasi land agitation. He was one of the persons arrested and tortured by the police attributing fabricated allegations on him that he assisted the agitations. He observed:

This is a great agitation in the history of adivasi struggles for land in Kerala. Both the public society and the state in Kerala had tried to suppress the agitation. The values put forward by the agitation are great and it will exist for a long time. The murmuring of the suppressed and marginalized people is going to be a storm in the near future. As Ambedkar pointed out, "political power is the key of all powers. If we succeed to obtain that power, then all doors of success will open before us". Political analysts and observers are pointing out the there are many exemplifications of accomplishing the ideas of Babaji in contemporary India. The country is moving towards the direction of great change in this fashion. These kinds of agitations are the evidences which manifest that the period in which the key of political power will be transferred to the oppressed and marginalized people are going to come very soon. So let us wait and witness for the period where the screaming of the victims will be transformed as songs of resistances.<sup>79</sup>

The other two important respondents were Velayudhan and his wife Chomi. A bullet was fired into his leg and as a result the foot was deformed and was severely injured in the police firing as part of Muthanga agitation. A sort of fearfulness, fright, distress and a

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<sup>78</sup> Interview with Mr. Balan, 3 June 2009.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with Mr. K K Surendran, 5 June 2009.

feeling of suspicion was found on both their faces and in their subsequent interaction when I met both Velayudhan and Chomi for the first time in 2009. I realized from the meeting that they could not recover from the panic created by the brutal suppression of Muthanga agitation by the police.<sup>80</sup> Despite the fact that they are carrying horror and insecurity as a result of brutal police torture, they still expressed their willingness to participate in the agitation until they get land. In their own words finally they expressed their strong feeling for land. They said: “we will fight until our death to get land. We also wanted to live like human beings in this society”.<sup>81</sup>

In the light of these excerpts from the field respondents<sup>82</sup>, I find new insights and meanings about the notion and constitution (in the making) of a new agency of adivasis in a non-Western and contemporary postcolonial social and political context. As stated in the introduction chapter, this idea of adivasi agency cannot be separated from their social and cultural context. Similarly, it could be observed that they attempt to go beyond the pre-given social roles and identity imposed on them by the hegemonic system through these resistances as a subaltern community. Here agency is not perceived at an individual level rather foregrounded in the context of their community life. As we know that in traditional Marxist view the political agency is constituted as ‘working class’ and shares a

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<sup>80</sup> Many a times I was asked to get out of their houses between the interview since they didn’t trust me fully and my purpose though I revealed my identity and explained the aim of my visit several times. Also often they asked me whether I was from the police department. It clearly unraveled the fear and insecurity still sedimented in their minds.

<sup>81</sup> Interview with Mr. Velayudhan and Mrs. Chomi, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of May, 2009.

<sup>82</sup> I haven’t included all the interviews I had done since most of them shared more or less the same concerns about the agitation and the necessity to continue it in the future if they are not getting land offered by the government.

specific subject position with respect to the relations of production. In this way traditional Marxism articulated the universal idea of working class which confined to the notion of a ‘transcendental subject’. Different from this, the above articulations on adivasi subjects, in their (adivasis’) own views, embedded in the new notion of a community, locating them in a specific and local historical and political context, contradict with the transcendental and liberal views on subjects and subject positions.

All the above narratives implied an urge to resist the state power despite the state apparatus repressing their agitation brutally. In the context of Muthanga agitation they confronted two dimensions of power. First, it refers to the sovereign power of the state which represented through the police firing and further torturing and second, the manifestation of power in the everydayness through the action of capturing the adivasis by the public and handing over to the police. Many respondents who had escaped from the brutal attack of police firing by running long distances (many kilo meters) within the interior forest shared that the public were waiting outside the forest to capture them when they reach the boundary which separates human habitat and forest.<sup>83</sup> It shows how power has been interlaced in the everyday public life which always wanted to subjugate adivasis and their agency. Here, one could observe that adivasi agency and identity is reconstituting in a relational way where they identify themselves and their position in the society in an antagonistic relation with the state on the one hand and the public on the other hand. In this historical and political context, I argue that their own particular forms of subjectivity, experience and agency is formed through the resistance against the

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<sup>83</sup> Here the gesture ‘public’ does not subsume the entire population however a significant number of people involved in this act and many silently supported it.



subordination and marginalization at various levels. Thus, the binary between subordination and resistance is still a useful category to understand the question of subjectivity,<sup>84</sup> experience and agency of the adivasis through the axis of the movement, AGMS.

## **Conclusion**

Let me recapitulate the major arguments here. In this chapter, it is argued that the AGMS's various identifications with adivasi land, presupposed the modern imagination of ownership over land. Here AGMS played a decisive role in constructing the new discourse which is centered on adivasi land question.

This modern and diverse identification proposes a new politics over land by invoking the past and tradition deeply rooted in their cultural practices, identity and community life. In this context, the invocation of adivasi community as part of movement activism does not exactly match to a pre-given and fixed primordial community; instead it demonstrates a "conscious mobilisation of cultural difference" (Appadurai 1997, 15) in terms of a community in the making. In other words, they claim for private ownership over land but

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<sup>84</sup> In order to understand the notion of subjectivity, I find Laclau's conceptualisation is quite illuminating. As Howarth succinctly summarised, "with respect to the question of structure and agency, Laclau has striven to find a middle path between these two critical positions. He rejects essentialist approaches to subjectivity, in which individuals are deemed simply to maximize their interests, or in which agents are reduced the role of reproducing pre-constituted structures. Instead, he argues that while human beings are constituted as subjects within discursive structures, these structures are inherently contingent and malleable. Once their 'undecidability' becomes visible in dislocatory situations when structures no longer function to confer identity, subjects become political agents in the stronger sense of the term, as they identify with new discursive objects and act to re-constitute structures" (2004, p. 264).

the claim is articulated in a communitarian manner. Therefore, eventually adivasis wanted to establish socially recognized economic rights over land and they (AGMS) rightly recognize that it would be a precondition to break the existing social and economic inequality and broadly marginality. Hence when they demanded for land they imagined a new and modern relationship to land which was totally absent in the former discourses on land articulated mainly through the non-adivasi organizations on behalf of adivasis. With this, I argue that the agitation for five acres of land is a political battle for alternative 'development' of adivasis which encompasses the idea of ownership and control of land as an important economic, cultural and political resource.

It is also evident that the trajectory of AGMS as a contemporary social movement manifested the process of interrogating marginality and the construction of new discourses on land which transcends the binary between tradition and modern. The identification of AGMS with 'land as a resource' and the idea to 'establish power over resources' along with the sacredness of forest land presuppose a distinct modern imagination of ownership over land. In this imagination, land carries multiple meanings which can be explicated as a dwelling place, a site of agricultural production, a social and cultural resource and capital and also in relation to the notions of private ownership. In short, when AGMS demanded land they imagined a new and multiple modes of relationship to land. In this multiple modes, certain proclamations are empirically grounded on adivasi culture and tradition.

Similarly, by examining the various discourses constructed within/by the movement, I put forward another argument in this chapter that in the present historical and political context, adivasis' own particular forms of subjectivity, experience and agency is formed

through the resistance against the subordination and marginalization at various levels. Thus, I believe that the binary between subordination and resistance is still a useful category to understand the question of subjectivity, experience and agency of the adivasis through the axis of the movement, AGMS. Following Hall's (1990) conceptualization of cultural identity, I argue that the discourses of the movement around the idea of community attempts to go beyond the traditional popular as well as academic efforts to portray adivasi identity confined to an essentialised past characterised as imperishable and enduring entity. Indeed, one could not discover a coherent image of a community at once rather a unified and organised image of a community can be derived from the discourses which emanated in the trajectory of the movement. A conscious attempt has been made to compile various aspects like claim for five acres of land, visualization of agricultural production on that land, recovery of cultural past and traditional practices in connection with that land along with the significance of the provisions offered in the constitutional and legal framework in reference to the community. This reconciliation of various aspects in the making of a modern adivasi community exemplifies the invocation of a distinct modernity.

Similarly, it seems reasonable to perceive that the question of adivasi agency is not a question of personal autonomy and individual determination rather ought to be visualized as a collective phenomenon. Thus, as stated in the introduction chapter, this idea of adivasi agency cannot be separated from their social and cultural context. Finally, the articulations on adivasi subjects, in their own views, which are embedded in the new notion of a community locating them in a specific and local historical and political

context, contradict with the transcendental and liberal views on subjects, subject positions and finally agency.

## Chapter 6

### **Plachimada Movement: A Descriptive Account**

The chapter primarily focuses to trace the genesis and further expansion of the trajectory of the anti-Coca Cola movement in Plachimada<sup>85</sup> (popularly known as Plachimada movement).<sup>86</sup> The purpose is to present a life history of the movement since its beginning. The conceptual analysis of the movement will be discussed in the next chapter. Plachimada movement emerged against a multinational company, The Hindustan Coca Cola Beverages Private Ltd (HCBL) at Perumatty panchayat in Palakkad district of Kerala. This movement is an amalgamation of various organisations and social actors. Hence, it is significant to look at the social base, social composition and disposition of the different categories of social actors. Plachimada movement was centered on a local issue of pollution and scarcity of water in the beginning. However, in later phases, larger issues such as global capital, globalisation, and the unrestrained extraction of natural

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<sup>85</sup> Plachimada is a name of a small rural hamlet in Palakkad district of Kerala. Rice was the main crop and cultivation of this area before the establishment of the Coca-Cola Bottling Plant. Adivasis and dalits constitute majority of the population of this place and most of them were engaged in agriculture.

<sup>86</sup> Hereafter, I use the same popular coinage to refer this movement in the rest of this study. This chapter is prepared on the basis of a wide variety of sources which encompass both primary and secondary sources. Though, this is merely a chronological description of the movement, a detailed conceptual analysis of this can be seen in the succeeding chapter. The primary data is collected from the agitators through unstructured and semi-structured interviews. The main secondary sources include newspaper reports published in the vernacular Malayalam newspapers such as Madyamam and Mathrubhumi; the English daily The Hindu; their fortnightly Frontline; Malayalam monthly magazine Keraleeyam; court judgements, official statements from Coca Cola, notices, leaflets and pamphlets. Also, I used several online sources to develop this descriptive account about the movement.

resources were incorporated into the dynamics of the movement. It manifests the local, national and international dimensions encompassed in the movements.

This chapter is presented in four sections. The first section explains the beginning of the movement and the contestations associated with the movement. The movement's second phase begins after one year of struggle which is discussed in the second section. The third section looks at the third phase of the movement which begins after completion 1000 days of sustained agitation on 15 January 2005 and in the final section, we narrate the current status of the movement.

### **A Brief History of the Initial Phase of the Movement**

A group of adivasis and local people in Plachimada with the support of various organizations began the agitation against the coco-cola company at Plachimada on 22 April, 2002. The agitation was inaugurated by C. K. Janu, the leader of the Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha and it was launched under the banner of *Adivasi Samrakshana Samithi* (Adivasis Protection Group). Around 2000 people including women and children had marched 2 kilo meters by carrying plastic pots and picketed the main entrance of the Coca Cola plant at Plachimada. The bottling unit of Coca Cola in Plachimada was established in March 2000 on 38 acres (15.2 hectares) of mostly multi-cropped agricultural land. The total investment of this project was around Rs. 560 million and they decided to produce the soft drink brands which are Coca Cola, Fanta, Limca, Thums-up, Maaza and Kinley soda. The plant distributed the sludge waste to the farmers as fertilizers since April 2000, although they were not aware that it contains the toxic chemicals like cadmium and led. In January 2001, a school teacher, Narendranath who

belongs to Vandithavalam School, visited Plachimada and enquired about it when he noticed that the students from Plachimada area reached the school very late every day due to the problem of drinking water. He presented a report regarding this in a district level workshop of Green Corps<sup>87</sup> which was held at Ezhukadu in Palakkad district.

Later, an agitation against the Coca Cola Plant in Plachimada to provide drinking water was organized under the leadership of Mr. Varadharajan, a ward member of Nellimedu in 2001.<sup>88</sup> As part of this agitation, they demanded that the Coca Cola plant has to distribute the purified water to the people through taps connected from the plant to its vicinity. The actual intention of the agitators was not to get water but to get jobs at the Coca Cola plant. In this context, the former Chittur MLA, Mr. Krishnankutty took an initiative to discuss the problem with the factory management and settle the issue by getting an assurance that the Cola Company will provide drinking water to the people in Plachimada.

The pollution of drinking water had become a severe problem by January 2002. The bore well which was set up by the Coca Cola Company in Plachimada colony is not able to start its functioning due to the scarcity of water. The inhabitants of Vijayanagar colony in Plachimada approached the contractor in Coca Cola plant in seeking jobs in the factory despite the fact that they were not provided with drinking water. For raising the demand of jobs, the community had to receive abusive responses and were dishonoured by the

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<sup>87</sup> This is a non-profit environmental organisation based in USA mainly focusing on training the people to fight for environmental issues.

<sup>88</sup> This was considered as the first organised effort to agitate against Coca Cola plant in Plachimada although it failed to continue the agitation.

political representatives. They also met the manager of the plant to discuss about the pollution for which the management responded saying that the pollution is quite a normal thing in any factory like this. This incident provoked the inhabitants of Vijayanagar colony and they realized that the closure of the Cola factory is the only solution if they want to live peacefully in Plachimada further.

At this juncture, the people particularly adivasis in Vijayanagar and Plachimada colonies seriously thought through an agitation against Cola factory. They contacted Vilayodi Venugopal<sup>89</sup> and some others to begin the agitation. Subsequently, they mobilized the adivasis and organized a road blockade in order to get drinking water under the leadership of Vilayodi Venugopal, Arumughan Pathichira, Velur Swaminathan and Kannadasan. Later *adivasi samrakshana sangam* (Adivasi Protection Association) organized a march to Meenakshipuram police aids post and demanded that the police should charge cases against the culprits who had assaulted the adivasis when they went to catch fish from Kambalathara dam.<sup>90</sup> This march started from Plachimada and continued with a sit-in (*dharna*) in front of the Cola plant against pollution of drinking water. Then they moved to Meenakshipuram police aids post which was 6 km away from Plachimada. As a result, the problem, pollution of drinking water was discussed.

The movement got impetus once scientific evidences about pollution of water by the plant were produced by outside agencies. Two important studies were carried out on

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<sup>89</sup> He is a non-adivasi voluntary social worker. His activities are mainly concentrated among the adivasi colonies at Perumatty, Pattancherry and Muthalamada Village Panchayats. He was the patron of *Adivasi Samrakshana Sangam* at that time.

<sup>90</sup> This is a mini reservoir located in Chittur taluk at Palakkad district.



pollution of the drinking water in the light of the people's complaints and discontents regarding the quality of water before launching the agitation. The first study was conducted by Dr. Satish Chandran, Southern Zone director of INTACH (Indian National Centre for Arts and Cultural Heritage) and the report indicated that the Coca Cola factory in Plachimada created serious environmental problems in the area of Plachimada due to the discharge of the partially purified waste water in to the vicinity of the company.

Another study was jointly conducted by Mr. Nityanand Jayaraman, the Indian co-ordinator of Corp Watch<sup>91</sup> and C R Bijoy, writer and an NGO activist. They published their report on March 2002. In which, they produced some evidence that the water in two wells at Vijayanagar colony are polluted. The report was based on a scientific examination carried out at Sargam Metals Laboratory in Chennai. The reports from Sargam Laboratory was analysed by Mr. Mark Chernaik, a staff scientist of Environmental Law Alliance World Wide (E-LAW) in U.S. and observed that "the water in the panchayat well is contaminated, hence, it is unusable for drinking, bathing, washing and agricultural purposes".<sup>92</sup>

People started sending complaints to the company officials and departments including district collector, state pollution control board, state human rights commission and the chief minister. In addition to this, Haritha Development Association<sup>93</sup> submitted a

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<sup>91</sup>CorpWatch is a research group based in USA. Their main aim is to promote non-profit investigative research and journalism to expose corporate malfeasance and to advocate for multinational corporate accountability and transparency.

<sup>92</sup> Source: Keraleeyam Magazine, January 2005.

<sup>93</sup> This is an NGO working in Perumatty panchayat in Palakkad where Coca Cola factory is located.

complaint to the district collector regarding the pollution generated by Coca Cola plant. In April 2002, the organizations which included People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), Haritha Development Association (HDA) and *Adivasi Samrakshana Sangam* (Adivasi Protection Association) had jointly given a notice to the Coca Cola plant which cautioned that if they fail to resolve the problem of pollution in the adjacent area of the company, they will start massive agitation against the Coca Cola plant in Plachimada. But the management did not respond favourably to their demands. Thus, the local residents of the colonies with the support of *Adivasi Samrakshana Sangam*, Haritha Development Association (HAD) and PUCL began the agitation by demanding that Coca Cola plant in Plachimada should close down and provide compensation for the pollution. In the back drop of this agitation the general manager of Hindustan Coca Cola Beverages Pvt. (Ltd) filed a petition in the High Court against the persons who led the agitation such as Vilayodi Venugopal, the patron of *Adivasi Samrakshana Sangam*; Velur Swaminathan, the Convenor of agitation council; Subrahmanian, the president of *Adivasi Samrakshana Sangam*; Murukesan, Kochikadmani and Pazhaniswami.

In May 2002, they have constituted Anti-Coca Cola Agitation Council (*Cola Virudha Samara Samithi*) to expand the participation of the people in the agitation. The media (both print and visual), except Madyamam daily<sup>94</sup>, had not given any attention and not reported the agitation until it completes 50 days. At the beginning of the agitation a leaflet had published by six organisations jointly which was entitled, 'Picketing against Coca Cola factory should make a success'. In which they had narrated the problem of the

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<sup>94</sup> Madyamam is a Malayalam daily which is owned by the Ideal Publications Trust, most of whose members are affiliated with the Kerala unit of the Jamaat-e Islami.

local people especially adivasis have been confronting in Plachimada as a result of the operation of the Coca Cola plant. From this, one could observe that in the beginning there was no support from the established political parties, mainstream media and even the common public and civil society actors of Kerala. The agitators gained support minimally from all these sections after they started protest against the Coca Cola plant at Plachimada. In mean the time Coca Cola plant management started indirectly obstructing and polluting the source of adivasis' drinking water and also their day-to-day functioning which caused the pollution of the adjacent areas of the plant. The people started the agitation under the circumstances in which the state institutions have not paid any serious attention to their grievances. By then, different environmental groups and social organizations working elsewhere came to know about the situation in Plachimada and offered their support to the agitation. Finally, they constructed a temporary thatched shed (*samara panthal*) opposite the entrance of the company and intensified the agitation. Around thousand families, who claimed that they were subjected to exploitation, had started to participate in the agitation in the initial one month protest. Later it was renamed as Anti-Coca Cola Agitation Council (*Coca Cola Virudha Samara Samithi*). As part of it they constituted a committee for helping the protest. At the beginning of this struggle, the form of this protest was only a blockade in front of the main gate of the bottling plant but gradually they devised other ways of protest. As part of this they campaigned by distributing notices and leaflets to every home and painted tar on all the advertisements of the Cola Company as a gesture of their outcry and protest.

The agitators listed out the following concerns against the Coca Cola plant:

- Salt proliferated and fused into the well water hence its taste had changed;

- The hardness of the water has increased;
- The water in the vicinity has become unusable to cook rice and pulses. Also the cooked rice gets damaged after 6 hours;
- The water level of the nearest dams (Kambalanthara, Vengalakkayam, Meenkara dams) had significantly decreased due to the establishment of the plant;
- The level of groundwater also decreased;
- The waste water from the factory is getting discharged in to the surroundings of the Meenkara dam and the empty agricultural fields of Meenakshipuram;
- Similarly sludge waste dumped in the paddy field mislead farmers to believe that it was an effective fertilizer;
- In fact the solid waste mixed with rain water during the monsoon season got penetrated in to the well water;
- A kind of foul smell existed around 1 km vicinity of the factory;
- 600 hundred acres of agricultural land had become unusable for cultivation due to the operation of the plant;
- People pointed out that earlier the peasants were able to extract the ground water for 24 hours with the help of pump-sets but now they are unable to draw water more than 4 hours;
- Plachimada colony, Vijayanagar Colony and Velur Madhavan Nair Colony in Perumatty Grama panchayat and Rajeev Nagar and Thottiyipani colonies in Pattuncheri panchayat are the most affected areas because of the establishment of the company.<sup>95</sup>

In this backdrop local people, particularly adivasis came up with a blockade against the company. Initially they stood in front of the company gate and had tried to block the labourers entering into the company. Even though this created a tension between agitators and labourers, invariably they permitted the labourers to enter into the factory and adopted a non-violent type of protest. Some political parties and groups who always involved in the anti-globalisation discourse also did not support this agitation, rather they argued that their local people are likely to get jobs in the company. The company strategically appointed some of the natives to mobilize the support from that area. The company also suppressed the fact that the labourers working in the plant are affected by skin and respiratory diseases on their body for around three months.

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<sup>95</sup> All these extracted from the pamphlet published by the anti-Coca Cola agitation council and also from the interview with the activists.

The local police in collusion with the company made all out efforts to dilute the protests and the movement. There are many instances that can be pointed out to indicate the outrageous attacks of the police against the agitators. In one such incident, Police tried to demolish the *samara panthal* (a temporary thatched shed) and berated the people by using abusive words on the evening of May 24, 2002. Hundreds of cases had been charged by the police against the agitators on different occasions. In the meantime, the ground water department conducted an enquiry headed by its director G. Balagangadaran Nair about the predicaments of the people and observed that the government has no control over the exploitation of ground water by the Coca Cola Company. Thus, it recommended that the government should take immediate and necessary action to control this. Further, they pointed out that the company at the moment are using 5 lakh litres of water per day and it has to be limited as 3 lakh litres. This enquiry commission was appointed by the government in response to the agitators against the company. The report also suggested that at present they are taking water from seven wells which have to be limited to three. The report also added that in the year 2000 the locality which includes Plachimada received 2200 millimetre liters of water but in 2001 it has reduced to 600 millimetres hence we need more scientific studies to prove that it has happened due to the establishment of the Coca Cola Company.<sup>96</sup>

Similarly, the medical officer of the Public Health Centre in the village had informed the Perumatty Grama Panchayat authorities that the people should not drink water from the three wells adjacent to the Coca Cola plant. Water samples from these wells examined at

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<sup>96</sup> Extracted from the reports published in the Malayalam news papers Madyamam (2 February, 2003) and Mathrubhumi (10 February 10, 2003).

the Regional Analytical Laboratory at Kozhikode under the orders of the District Medical Officer have revealed hardness, chlorides and concentration of total dissolved solids (TDS) beyond tolerable levels for drinking water. The Public Health Centre's report supports the contention of the people of Plachimada. For over a year since 2001, women in the Vijayanagaram Colony in the village have been walking nearly 5 kilometers up and down every morning and evening to fetch a pot of water. The open wells in the Colony have either dried up or little water left in them has become unpalatable.

### ***Repertoire of Contentions in the Initial Phase***

Anti Coca Cola agitation council (*Coca Cola Virudha Samara Samithi*) adopted different forms of agitations in the initial phase which includes picketing, public meetings, dharnas, marches, etc. These are all the legitimate and conventional forms of agitations however they organized a one-day bandh in this region. They constituted different committees at the district and state level in order to help the agitation. Initially the public and mainstream society considered it as a local issue and didn't give much importance. It took around one year to attain a serious attention of the public and mainstream media. By then several outside organisations recognised the seriousness of the problem. National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM) had organized a journey from Plachimada to Ayodhya by raising a slogan *Desh Bachavo Desh Banavo* (Protect the nation, Construct the nation). It began on 26<sup>th</sup> of January, 2003 and ended in Ayodhya on March 30. Medha Patkar led the journey and many public intellectuals like Sandeep Pandey, Aruna Roy, Kuldeep Nayyar had participated. The primary aim of this journey was to protect people's power and rights through national unity by opposing all kinds of polarization particularly in terms of caste and communalism.

Plachimada agitation had become a remarkable protest in the recent socio-political history of Kerala and attained a noticeable place even in the global context of agitation when it completed one year of constant struggle. By then it had become an inspiration for many resistances against multinational corporations like Coca Cola and Pepsi in different parts of the world. It was a resistance for survival especially of the adivasis in the beginning however later it had been transformed as a protest against neo-colonial slavery. Velur Swaminathan, Convener of the agitation committee observed when it completed one year of agitation:

It is not an easy task to undertake a struggle for one year without adopting any violent form of agitation, essentially in a peaceful manner without the support of any mainstream political parties. In this context, let me ask a question that is it possible to keep this consistency and continuity of the struggle for any political parties in Kerala?<sup>97</sup>

As known that picketing, public meetings, *dharnas* (sit-ins), demonstrations are the conventional form of agitations which are powerful and continued for the initial one year of Plachimada agitation. Eventually, committees have been constituted at the state and district level to help the agitation.

In this juncture, one of the leaders of the agitation since the beginning recollected:

Our political parties and media committed serious mistakes with respect to this agitation in the initial phase. They tried to perceive and reduce it as a local issue. Later, when they understood the significance of this agitation the political parties made all efforts to hijack this struggle. In the end of the initial phase (the first one year), some of the parties came to the floor although they were moving very strategically. Recollect the money for the consumed water, control the exploitation of ground water were some of the compromise formula put forward by these groups. Opposition leader of the Kerala Legislative Assembly, Comrade V S Achuthanandan and Janata Dal leader Mr. M P Veerendrakumar supported the struggle even though the local leadership of their parties tried to defeat the struggle. Some of the local leaders explicitly came forward and promised water for the company.

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<sup>97</sup> Quoted from news paper reports published in both Madyamam and Mathrubhumi.

Similarly, some of them tried to provoke the common public and turned them against the agitation by raising the question of employment. But eventually, all of them compelled to support the struggle in the global context where protest against globalisation and imperialism have been growing.<sup>98</sup>

One of the radical women activist observed: “In the context of the struggle after one year, if anybody was opposing the struggle then it was quite sure that they would have been isolated. This situation forced them to change their initial hostile approach towards the agitation”.<sup>99</sup> The leadership of the agitation commonly alleged that media took more time to come over the promises offered by the company. Besides, they also alleged that the company had given gifts of huge amounts to the media persons for not reporting the agitation.

### **Second Phase of the Agitation**

The protest against Coco-Cola Company entered into the second phase when they decided to organize different programmes as part of its first anniversary. Renowned environmental activist Dr. Vandana Shiva inaugurated the first anniversary meeting of the agitation. In which she declared that Plachimada agitation as a historic event. As part of it they conducted various programmes like a gathering of painters and artists, presentation of folk songs, gathering of poets and poetry recital and also organised larger collective of artists, creative writers, cultural and human rights activists, environmentalists, public meetings etc from April 20-29, 2003. In this phase of agitation the points of contestation also changed. The agitators organised a journey (*yathra*) from

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<sup>98</sup> Interview with Mr. Vilayodi Venugopal, 12 June 2010.

<sup>99</sup> Interview with Ms. Hema, 15 June 2010.



Plachimada to Thiruvananthapuram to spread the message of the movement and also lobbied with the government to take action against the Cola plant. They organised a march to MLA's home, demonstration with kerosene lights and the agitators were jailed when they carried out a march to the district office of ground water department. Besides they organised a human chain in front of the Cola plant at Plachimada.

Along with non-violent form of agitations, they also opted for more violent form of protests like forcefully capturing three full water tankers brought from the nearest Panchayats to the cola factory to start the production of cola. The agitators blocked the vehicles carrying huge amount of water and stated that the company was subverting the government decision through this act. Later, they released the captured water into the dried up agricultural fields in the areas like Pattikulam and Enthilpalam. Another significant event in the second phase was the formation of plachimada solidarity committee. This Committee is constituted as a conglomeration of 32 different organisations from across the state of Kerala in order to provide support to the agitation against the Coca Cola plant. This was constituted mainly by the civil society actors and middle classes.

Interestingly, some of the interventions of the various institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had helped the anti-Coca Cola movement in Plachimada to invite the attention of the larger public, both nationally and internationally. In which the most important one was the intervention of British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). In late 2003, Plachimada caught the attention of the global media and international civil society as a result of the report broadcasted by BBC Radio. They reported that the sludge supplied by Coca Cola plant to the farmers which was used as fertiliser contains

"dangerous levels of the known carcinogen cadmium," and they also found that it was also useless as a fertilizer. The report, published in the South Asia section of the BBC's website, says that the chemicals were traced in the course of an investigation by BBC Radio 4's 'Face the Facts' programme. The findings have prompted scientists to call for the practice to be halted, according to the BBC. They also reported that the presenter of 'Face the Facts', John Waite, visited Plachimada and sent sludge samples to the University of Exeter. "Tests revealed the material was useless as a fertilizer and contained a number of toxic metals, including cadmium and lead," the report says. The laboratory's senior scientist, is reported to have said that the contamination had spread to the water supply, with levels of lead in a nearby well going well above those set by the World Health Organisation.

The report says that Britain's leading poisons expert, Professor John Henry, Consultant at St. Mary's Hospital in London, had urged the authorities to ban the supply of the sludge. The toxin levels found would pollute the land, local water supplies and the food chain. The report quoted Prof. Henry and observed:

The results have devastating consequences for those living near the areas where this waste has been dumped and for the thousands who depend on crops produced in these fields... What most worries me about the levels found is how this might be affecting pregnant women in the area. You would expect to see an increase in miscarriages, still births and premature deliveries.<sup>100</sup>

Another event which helped to capture the attention of the common public, administrators and civil society was the New Delhi based *Centre for Science and Environment's* (CSE) report published on 5 August, 2003. This report disclosed the presence of high quantity of fertilizer in the soft drinks produced and distributed by Coca

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<sup>100</sup> [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/3096893.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/3096893.stm), retrieved on 10 June 2010.

Cola Company in India. Under these circumstances the world water conference which was held at Plachimada from January 21-23, 2004, declared the significance of water as a public resource. The conference called for a struggle against the looting of water by multinational companies in different parts of the world. The 'Plachimada Declaration' adopted at the end of the conference began with an assertion that water is not a private property, not a commodity, but a common resource, a fundamental right of human beings. This is the context in which political parties except Congress mainly announced their solidarity and support to the Plachimada movement in the second phase of the agitation. Subsequently, they organized different programmes and protests in order to establish their support to the movement.

During this phase of the agitation various expert committees and government departments had undertaken studies on the issues of pollution and excess extraction of water by the Coca Cola plant. In fact, that was the basic reasons to launch the agitation against the Cola plant in Plachimada and they published their reports. Indeed, it had increased the complexity of the issue addressed by the Plachimada movement. Many of the reports published by the government departments and institutions had not established any direct link between the operation of Coca Cola plant in Plachimada and the pollution of drinking water and water scarcity. This is a movement launched on the basis of the direct subjective experiences of the people and commonsensical assumption. Most often, the state institutions such as court, government and legislative assembly considered the 'so called' expert and scientific knowledge as more legitimate and neglected the lived experience of the people. All the officials reached a consensus that an in-depth and

scientific study is inevitable to find out the exact reasons of the pollution of water and why this has been continuing. Hence the assumptions and allegations against the Coca Cola plant in Plachimada will be proved and accepted only through the findings and conclusions of this study. Here the government took the position that they should only depend up on these reports to take necessary actions against the Cola plant in Plachimada. Now the social activists and workers involved in different types of problems and issues which encompass sophisticated and specialized knowledge. Most often this knowledge is the construction of the public institutions. Hence as far as the contemporary social activists are concerned, it is very important to critically look at how these institutions constructed this knowledge, its process and efficiency of those institutions.

During this phase of the agitation joint parliamentary committee (JPC) team consisted of parliament members and scientists visited Plachimada to examine about the sludge contains toxic chemicals although the company authority didn't permit them to enter into the company. They had examined the exterior places of the company and returned back to Delhi. The scientists came along with the team were mainly from National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad working under Health and Family Department, Government of India. They reported that the cola company officials insisted that prior permission is needed to enter into the company.

Another major incident happened in connection with the agitation was the intervention of Perumatty Grama Panchayat where Coca Cola factory was located. The panchayat authorities had cancelled the license of the coca cola factory on the basis of excessive exploitation of ground water by the company. The Panchayat stated that as a consequence

of this excessive exploitation of water, the water level in the wells and other sources in the vicinity of the company had also dropped considerably. It also negatively affected the quality of limited water which is available for drinking and other necessary requirements.

The Panchayat had received lot of complaints from the public in this regard and subsequently they decided not to renew the license of the company on 7 April, 2003.

They decided to execute the decision since 17 May, 2003 and earlier the Panchayat had given the license for operating the plant till March 31, 2003. But the Kerala High Court

had stayed the decision of the Panchayat to cancel the license of the company for one month. The court had made this judgment on the basis of an appeal filed by the Coca

Cola Company which questioned the Panchayat's decision in the court. The High Court had suggested the Panchayat to give an opportunity to present coca cola company

management's justifications and arguments before taking a decision to cancel the license. Hence the Panchayat was forced to follow this High court's suggestion and revoked the

decision to cancel the license for one month. Perumatty Panchayat informed the court that the company can submit their appeal to the government and question the Panchayat's

decision. Therefore, the court directed the company to submit their appeal to the government and also instructed the government to take a decision on it within one month.

The court also suggested maintaining the status quo (permission to operate factory) until the government's decision comes. Similarly, the Kerala Government through the

Secretary, Local Self Government Department (LSGD) had stayed the Perumatty Grama Panchayat's decision not to renew the license issued to the Hindustan Coca Cola

Beverages Ltd. (HCBL), an Indian arm of Coca-Cola. The LSGD has ordered to maintain

the status quo till July 18, 2003 before disposing off the appeal filed by HCBL against the Panchayat's decision.

In the meantime, the subject committee of Kerala government under the leadership of Mr. T M Jacob (minister of food and civil supplies), visited Plachimada to collect evidences of excessive exploitation of water and toxic content of wastes produced by the company on November 3, 2003. But, paradoxically the committee had not met the Panchayat authorities and the people who have been agitating for two years since 2001. It had created great dissatisfaction and anger among the people who were prepared to express their miseries before the committee. But at the same time some of the members of the subject committee<sup>101</sup> visited Plachimamada *samara panthal* and collected memorandums.<sup>102</sup> Therefore, the committee arranged another meeting at Thiruvananthapuram on 29 December, 2003 to collect the complaints from the public regarding the problems created by the Coca Cola factory. This meeting was scheduled by the committee when they were critiqued in terms of last visit held at Plachimada on November 3. But, they were reluctant to meet the public and Panchayat authorities. Although the Perumatty Panchayat president Mr. A Krishnan said:

It was very difficult for the public to go to Thiruvananthapuram and submit the complaints. However, in order to appear before the committee, the Coca Cola Company arranged 25 buses to bring around thousand people from Plachimada, Pattanchery and some other places in Chittur taluk to influence and subvert the entire process. They carried the people by claiming different categories include labourers of the company, farmers and locals. They made

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<sup>101</sup> The members were Mr. Kodyeri Balakrishnan, Raju Ebrahim, K P Rajendran, C K Nanu, V K Chandran and K K Ramachandran (all of them represented LDF and they were the opposition front in the Legislative Assembly).

<sup>102</sup> Mathrubhumi, 4 November, 2003.

an attempt to make a procession in favour of Coca Cola Company. They also arranged an entertainment trip to Kovalam and had paid Rs. 200 as pocket money for each person.<sup>103</sup>

In this context, the Kerala High Court's division bench rejected the appeal submitted by Coca Cola to stay the government order put a ban on ground water utilisation till June 15, 2004. The court undoubtedly said that the people's right to drinking water is most important. The division bench consisted Justice Syriac Joseph and Justice K Padmanabhan Nair stated in the judgment that the problems of the people in Chittur taluk who are confronting a severe shortage of drinking should be considered as the most important problem than the problems raised by the Coca Cola Company. The bench also acknowledged government's argument that they put a ban on the basis of public interest since it is inevitable to overcome the severe drought prevailing in the area.

Later, another bench comprising Justice M. Ramachandran and Justice K.P. Balachandran ordered that the Coca Cola Company is entitled to draw 5 lakh litres of groundwater a day from its plant at Plachimada in Palakkad without any right for accumulation in case of non-use. They made it clear that the restrictions imposed for the company's consumption would not be applicable when water is drawn for additional requirements such as supply of water to people in the area. The court directed that the company should involve in community development projects such as healthcare and supply of water for people in the area. The court was of the view that since the general public was apprehensive about water shortage, it became an essential duty of the company to address it.

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<sup>103</sup> Interview with Mr. A Krishnan, 2 July, 2010.

Plachimada acquired national and international attention when the agitation moved to the third year. By this time the gravity and magnitude of the problems raised by the movement managed to widen its horizon. By the time the movement was expanded and strengthened its possibilities and reiterated that they were not willing to surrender before the multinational companies. According to the agitators' view the basic purpose of the company was very visible and it was to exploit the basic resources through their private capital with the support of the state who are bargaining and urging the companies for huge investments. Anti-Coca Cola agitation council conducted third year's struggle by organising a confluence of the people (*Jana Sangamam*) from different parts of the state. Hundreds of people including Parliament members, MLAs, writers, teachers and students and broadly civil society actors gathered at Plachimada and declared their solidarity to the agitation against the Coca Cola Company. Once again the division bench of the Kerala High Court intervened in this matter however, this time they took the decision in favour of the company by giving an order to the panchayat to renew the license of the Cola Company within one week. If they failed to provide the license within the stipulated time the company can start its operation by considering that the license has automatically renewed. In the backdrop of this decision, the panchayat has decided to renew the license of the company on 6 June, 2005. On the other hand, anti-Coca Cola agitators picketed the company when the company moved to begin its operation in the light of the High Court order. The picketing started by 6.30 in the morning and ended up by 8.30 pm. This was an agitation to register their protest and anger against the court's decision in favour of the company. They cautioned that they will not permit to start the operation even if they obtained court order and panchayat license. In this backdrop, the Kerala government filed



a special leave petition in the Supreme Court against the judgement of the High Court which was favourable to the Coca Cola Company. In this petition government argued that if the Cola plant is permitted to extract 5 lakh liters of water per day according to High Court order, the ground water level at Plachimada will drastically go down and eventually it will become a major reason for the scarcity of water at Perumatty panchayat and its vicinity.

Later, a three-day world water conference was organised in this area and the Perumatty Grama panchayat was the organiser. The three-day conference ended on 23 January, 2004 near the Pepsi plant which is located in the neighbouring Puthusseri panchayat. This seminar offered great exuberance to the people who have been participating in the agitation and also to the people who were living in the vicinity of the Pepsi Company. Several people from different walks of life attended the conference including the nationally and internationally known social movement activist, environmental activists, writers, artists, 'Green' politicians, etc. The seminar concluded by publicly demanding the significance of consistent struggle against the looting of water by multi-national companies in different parts of the world. The seminar also planned an India-wide agitation against the privatisation of water which was announced by Vanadana Shiva at the concluding session. In addition to this, they adopted a declaration at the end of the conference which was titled as 'Plachimada declaration'. In which they clearly articulated that 'water is not a private property, not a commodity, but a common resource, a fundamental right of man'. Further, they asserted, "we should resist all criminal attempts to marketise, privatise and corporatise water. Only through these means we would be able to ensure the fundamental and inalienable right to water for the people all over the

world".<sup>104</sup> In this context, let me recount the Plachimada declaration issued at the end of the conference which states:

- Water is the basis of life; it is the gift of nature; it belongs to all living beings on earth.
- Water is not a private property. It is a common resource for the sustenance of all.
- Water is the fundamental right of man. It has to be conserved, protected and managed. It is our fundamental obligation to prevent water scarcity and pollution and to preserve it for generations.
- Water is not a commodity. We should resist all criminal attempts to marketwise, privatise and corporatize water. Only through these means we can ensure the fundamental and inalienable right to water for the people all over the world.
- The Water Policy should be formulated on the basis of this outlook.
- The right to conserve, use and manage water is fully vested with the local community. This is the very basis of water democracy. Any attempt to reduce or deny this right is a crime.
- The production and marketing of the poisonous products of the Coca-Cola, Pepsi Cola corporates lead to total destruction and pollution and it also endangers the very existence of local communities.
- The resistance that has come up in Plachimada, Pudukchery and in various parts of the world is the symbol of our valiant struggle against the devilish corporate gangs who pirate our water.
- We, who are in the battlefield in full solidarity with the Adivasis who have put up resistance against the tortures of the horrid commercial forces in Plachimada, exhort the people all over the world to boycott the products of Coca Cola and Pepsi Cola.
- Coca Cola – Pepsi Cola “quit India”.<sup>105</sup>

### **Third Phase of the Movement**

The Plachimada movement entered the third phase of agitation when they decided to launch the protest demanding the permanent closure of the Hindustan Coca Cola bottling plant at Plachimada from January 15, 2005. Picketing and public meetings were organised in front of the factory as part of it on that day. They have also taken a pledge to

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<sup>104</sup> Taken from the reports published in the Malayalam news papers Madyamam, Mathrubhumi and the Hindu published during these days (20-25 January, 2004).

<sup>105</sup> Source: <https://plachimada.wordpress.com/plachimada-declaration>

boycott products of Cola companies. Mylamma,<sup>106</sup> one of the main adivasi leaders of the agitation recollected about the agitation in the following words:

We are fighting for the right to get water for drinking and bathing. Nobody is supporting the attempts to pollute the drinking water and its excessive extraction even in terms of employment preservation. It not only affects the present generation but it will create difficulties for the future generation. We never expected that this much problem the company will create when they started functioning. Water has become contaminated and unusable for drinking and bathing within six months after the establishment of the company. Indeed, this is a fight against these types of companies in Kerala who are denying the basic right for water (Keraleeyam 2005, 18).

Further she narrated on the reasons to launch the agitation at Plachimada against Coca Cola Company in the following:

They came to our village with glittering offers; that our people would get many job opportunities in the plant; the overall development of our village would be taken care of; the economic growth of the area would be strengthened etc. We waited and waited... nothing miraculous happened. On the contrary, six months went by, slowly we started facing the reverse effects. Except a few, nobody from the locality was given jobs. The water level in the wells of the surrounding colonies showed a sharp depletion. The quality of the water -its odour, taste, hardness- got worsened. It became non-potable. We stopped using it. We were forced to fetch water from a distance of three to five kilometres. Several uncommon diseases started showing their neck out. The farmers around the plant stopped cultivation due to severe shortage of water. This was another thunderbolt on us that took away our daily little earnings. We were forced to migrate to faraway lands, seeking for some work or other to make our living. Suddenly we felt terribly helpless, facing the fact that we were being robbed. Our precious water resource had been stolen... lakhs of liters every day... Where would I get some fresh and pure drinking water anymore? How many kilometers should we have to walk to fetch a drop of water? Who will compensate the heavy loss incurred upon us by this giant plant?<sup>107</sup>

During this phase anti-Coca Cola agitation council organized a journey named as *Janakeeya Jaladhikara Yathra* (Journey for People's Power over Water) from January 26

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<sup>106</sup> Mayilamma was an adivasi woman and leader of the Plachimada movement. She died on 6 January 2007 at the age of 67 before I begin the present study.

<sup>107</sup> Source: <http://plachimada.wordpress.com/2008/01/19/a-tribute-to-mylamma>.

to February 23, 2007 in the state. The main slogan of the journey was “Water for Life, Water governance for People”. Major demands put forward in the journey were stated as:

1. The Coca Cola Company which has been destroying the eco system of Plachimada must give the compensation for people, shut down the factory and leave the place permanently;
2. Conduct legal proceedings against Coca Cola which was responsible for the toxication of Plachimada;
3. Transfer sovereign power to Panchayat with legal provisions in order to protect natural resources and
4. To avoid repeating Plachimada necessary changes must initiate in the existing Acts for controlling pollution and Panchayati Raj Act.

From this one could see that by fifth year of agitation the main demand of the movement was to permanently close down the factory by seeking the compensation from them. Also they demanded to begin the legal proceedings against the company at the earliest. In this context, Jhonson<sup>108</sup> writes:

Indeed, the following are some of the historical achievements of this struggle which include Plachimada agitation attained worldwide attention; government was forced to ban Coca Cola products even if it was considered as a minor token effort; the sale of Coca Cola considerably decreased in Kerala and also the company was forced to stop its function in Kerala. But, it requires a more careful inquiry that why this agitation hasn't fully succeeded yet though almost all political parties, social movements and media supported this agitation. It is a challenge before the social actors that most of the main issues raised as part of this agitation were not resolved yet (Keraleeyam August 2007, 70).

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<sup>108</sup> He was the former chairperson of Anti-Coca Cola Solidarity Committee.

Similarly, Bijoy also had written about the challenges before the anti-Coca Cola agitation council and solidarity committee. He writes:

This struggle proves that the state has lost its courage to work against capital. People's reaction is unable to create a repercussion on the spheres of politics, bureaucracy and judiciary. These kinds of agitation must suggest solutions and also to formulate the strategies for resolving it. The conventional modes of protests including marches are insufficient in the age of globalisation. We would be able to suggest solutions to change which is based on market ideology. Governing system must come under the control of the people. The responsibility and power to control ground water utilisation and environmental protection must be transferred from the government agencies to the community. The community must have complete right over it and the necessary changes have to be done in the Panchayat Raj Act in order to make sure of *gramasabha's* (village assembly) sovereign power in this regard. The two acts such as Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 and Scheduled Tribes and Other Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 are the predecessors in this regard. The solution to the problems in the democratic system is to strengthen the democratisation of the same system at higher level. Kerala society is ready for these sorts of measures after the people's planning programmes and decentralised experiments. The great challenge is the natural transition from decentralised ways to the system of decentralised autonomy (Keraleeyam March 2006, 19)

In 2010, when the agitation completed eight years of struggle the Kerala state government decided to establish a tribunal to judge the compensation claims of people affected by the activities of the Coco-Cola factory at Plachimada. The Chief Minister of Kerala Mr. V.S. Achuthanandan declared the Cabinet's decision to set up a legal agency to assess the actual compensation for every applicant and issue orders to the company for compliance on 30 June, 2010. This was for the first time in the political history of the State that such a tribunal was being proposed to offer compensation to victims of industrial pollution.<sup>109</sup>

In May 2009, the government had appointed a high-power committee (HPC) on the basis of the recommendation of the State Ground Water Board, "to assess the extent of

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<sup>109</sup> The Hindu, 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2010.

damages caused by the Coca-Cola plant at Plachimada and [for] claiming compensation”. The 13-member HPC, headed by Additional Chief Secretary K. Jayakumar, and it comprised directors of various departments like agriculture, animal husbandry and groundwater, deans of Kerala Agricultural University, the Kerala State Pollution Control Board, an environmental expert, and a retired judge. This committee held eight meetings and conducted a public hearing at Perumatty Panchayat office which was attended by the affected people, voluntary workers, concerned citizens, and the panchayat representatives. It reportedly evaluated all the available reports on Plachimada besides visiting the village and also organizing two panel discussions with experts before submitting its detailed report. The committee had come out with a 91-page report which explained that the committee had compelling evidence (from several studies by legislative committees, the Supreme Court Monitoring Committee, scientific bodies as well as civil rights groups and concerned individuals) concluded by making the following observation:

Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Private Ltd. has caused serious depletion of the water resources of Plachimada, and has severely contaminated the water and soil. Water resources were severely polluted by lethal heavy metals contained in the toxic sludge generated by the company. A substantial part of Plachimada's soil has also been polluted by the hazardous sludge illegally distributed by the company to unsuspecting farmers. The company is obviously liable to pay compensation, for the heavy damages they have caused to the natural resources of the area.... It is evident that the damages caused by the Coca-Cola factory at Plachimada have created a host of social, economic, health and ecological problems, cutting across different sectors (2010).

In this context, it must be important to quote the major findings of the report which are as follows:

- The Coca Cola Company at Plachimada has been causing environmental degradation by over-extraction of groundwater and irresponsible disposal of sludge.
- The Coca Cola Company is culpable under several laws in force.
- The water sources of the area have been affected and the water scarcity has been compounded.
- By passing off the sludge as manure, the company has not only misguided the farmers but has become responsible for soil degradation, water contamination, and the consequent agricultural losses.
- There has been a steady decline in the agriculture production in the area.
- The production of milk, meat, and eggs also has suffered.
- Metals like cadmium, lead, and chromium have been detected in the sludge and this has affected the health of the people.
- The general health of the people has been affected with skin ailments, breathing problems, and other debilities.
- Low birth-weight in newborns has also been noticed.
- Environment of the village has acutely been damaged by polluting water and soil.
- Drinking water has become scarce and women have to walk long distances and this has deprived them of their wages and these needs to be compensated.
- Children have dropped out of schools on account of the social, health, and economic factors caused by the pollution and this opportunity cost has to be compensated.
- The gram panchayat has been providing drinking water through tankers ever since the wells and water bodies were rendered useless by the company by its extraction of water and disposal and effluents.
- The actual economic loss on account of the depletion of water resources has not been quantified but its proxies have been used.
- The compensation that could be claimed on various losses has been calculated as below:
 

Agriculture Loss	Rs. 84. 16 Crores
Health Damages:	Rs. 30 Crores
Cost of Providing Water:	Rs. 20 Crores
Wage Loss and Opportunity Cost:	Rs. 20 Crores
Cost of Pollution of the Water Resources :	Rs. 62. 10 Crores
Total:	Rs. 216. 26 Crores
- There are sufficient provisions under the existing laws to claim this compensation of these damages from the Company under the ‘polluter pays principle’.
- However, it is desirable to set up a dedicated institution to adjudicate the individual claims. Such a dedicated mechanism could either be Tribunal under Article 323 B of the Constitution of India to be legislated by the state legislature or an Authority under section 3(3) of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 to be created by the central government.

- Once the government decides on a suitable mechanism and it comes into being, individual claims will have to be assessed and actual compensation decreed and the polluter Company made to pay it.
- The Company located in this drought-prone area, should not resume its operation.

(2010: 88-90)

From the above recommendations of the report it is obvious that committee took the view that when the enjoyment of property of one person causes harm to the life and property rights of the adjoining owner, the liability under tort is invoked and the victim is entitled to compensation. It calculated the overall money value of the damage caused by the Coca-Cola unit at Rs.216.26 crore, an amount that could be claimed as reasonable compensation.

In the light of the recommendations of the above mentioned committee report, the Kerala Legislative Assembly passed the *Plachimada Coca-Cola Victims Relief and Compensation Claims Special Tribunal Bill, 2011* (hereafter Plachimada Tribunal Bill) on February 24, 2011. The main intention of this Bill is to secure the interests of the inhabitants of Plachimada in Palakkad district by ensuring the compensation for the ecological damage caused by the Coca Cola unit that had functioned in the village until recently. The Plachimada Tribunal Bill is an outcome of almost two- year long exercise to quantify the damages made by the Coca Cola Company. The bill suggests the constitution of a three member tribunal to be chaired by a person in the rank of a district judge and having an administrative member and an expert member. The tribunal would have all the powers under the Code of Civil Procedure and two-year tenure. Cases arising from ecological damage caused by the company and applications for compensation or restitution of damaged property would be taken up by the tribunal, which would decide



on the compensation after hearing both the appellants and the company. The tribunal shall, while passing any award or order, apply the principles of sustainable development, precautionary principle and the polluter pays principle. Once compensation is awarded, the company shall deposit the entire award amount with the tribunal. All appeals against the tribunal's decisions would lie with the High Court. Subsequently, the Bill has been sent to the Union Ministry in order to get the assent of the President of India. In the meantime, agitators of the anti-Coca Cola agitation council and Plachimada Solidarity Committee marched to the HCCBL unit at Plachimada on August 25, 2011 and hoisted a flag there, symbolically occupying the company. The agitators demanded the central government to take necessary steps to get the President's assent to the Plachimada Tribunal Bill. After receiving the Bill, the Union Home Ministry had asked several clarifications from the Kerala state, particularly concerned with the State's competence to enact such a piece of legislation. In this regard, the Ministry asked opinions and clarification from the lawyers who are practicing in the Supreme Court about the legal validity of this Bill.<sup>110</sup>

### **Present Status of the Movement**

The Coca Cola unit in Plachimada closed down its factory in March 2004 however the movement was very active until 2010 to accomplish the demands they raised. But later on, especially in the last five years it slowed down. Several activists commonly pointed out as a response to my question that it is not an easy task to keep the momentum of a social movement for more than ten years. The internal differences within the social

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<sup>110</sup> The Hindu, 17 September 2011.

movement and the differences among the civil society actors regarding the matters such as further repertoire of contention, success of the movement, future course of action, etc.

played a crucial role in weakening the movement. According to N P Jhonson:

It is not an easy task to reinvigorate Plachimada movement at present. The dispute among the civil society actors about the future of the movement has great breadth. Adivasis alone will not be able to take up the movement further since the involvement of the civil society actors and middle class people have that much significance in that movement.<sup>111</sup>

A significant number of actors believed that the Plachimada Tribunal Bill is a historic achievement of the movement and wanted to wait to get the assent from the president of India. The movement was sustained by registering some symbolic protests now and then during the last five years. In the meantime, the agitation council and solidarity committee jointly organised a march to recover the assets of the Cola company in Plachimada on 17 December, 2011. As part of this agitation the activists declared that they captured the assets of Cola company in Plachimada as a gesture of protestation under the circumstances in which corporate-political conspiracy has been happening to dismiss the Plachimada Tribunal Bill which was unanimously passed by the Kerala Legislative Assembly.

On 17 December 2011, around five hundred people led a march from Kannimari to the Cola company gate. When they reached before the company gate around 20 activists smashed police barricade and entered into the premises of the company and declared that they recovered the assets of Cola Company. Later police arrested them and produced in the court. Though the court allowed them to leave in their own self-bail, they rejected it. Hence the Chittur magistrate remanded 22 activists for 14 days.

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<sup>111</sup> Interview with Jhonson, 21 February, 2016.

The union government didn't send the Plachimada Tribunal Bill for president's consideration and approval though they kept the bill under their control until December 2014 without taking any concrete action on it and finally sent it back to the state. In this backdrop Mr. N K Premachandran, the former water resource minister of Kerala who had prepared and presented the Plachimada Tribunal Bill in Kerala Legislative Assembly wrote:

The decision of the central government to send the bill back is a deviation from the constitutional provisions and by which they are bypassing the customary norms. Here social justice is on the one side and multinational corporate monopoliser on the other side. Similarly, Kerala government and legislative assembly on the one side and Coca Cola are on opposite side however, the central government only considered Cola's stand and took the decision arbitrarily. This approach is totally against the spirit of the state-centre relationship based on the tradition of Indian democracy and constitution. The strength of Indian federalism is its mutual friendship and respect in state-centre relationship. But unfortunately, through this specific act of sending the bill back to the state by the union government under the influence of Coca Cola is actually appropriated the powers and rights of the Kerala government as well as the legislative assembly enshrined in the constitution.<sup>112</sup>

Under these circumstances, both plachimada agitation council and solidarity committee is pressurising the state government to get the Plachimada Tribunal Bill approved by the centre. Given this scenario, there is no effective movement at this moment.

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<sup>112</sup> Mathrubhumi Daily, 6 January 2015.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Plachimada as a Site of Predicament and Promise:**

#### **Interface between Global Capitalism and Local Resistance**

The various sociological dimensions of Plachimada movement are analysed in this chapter, mainly on the basis of the descriptive account outlined in the previous chapter. The adivasis were primarily affected by the establishment of Coca Cola plant in Plachimada. This also marks another instance of the phenomena of ‘development’ induced dispossession which has been continuing since the beginning of 1990 at a substantial level and it mainly impacted the life of marginalised castes and communities in India. Also, the experience of Plachimada provides a counter point to the claims made in terms of ‘Kerala model’ of development.

This chapter is presented in four sections. The first section critically examines marginality of adivasis in Plachimada, which I termed as “wasteland” which has been created by the establishment of a global capitalist enterprise. In this case, how Coca Cola as a representative of global capital plays out is discussed. The second section of this chapter perceives the idea of local which is not a pre-given entity rather as the construction of a new local by interfacing with the global. The third section analyses the trajectory of Plachimada as an environmental movement in the backdrop of the discourses on environmental movements in India. In the final section, I look at the tension between modern scientific rationality and lived experience of the people by examining the discourses produced around the fundamental issues on which Plachimada

movement has been articulated. Also, the intricate connection between knowledge and power is also discussed.

### **Advent of Global Capital and Marginality of Adivasis as ‘Wasteland’**

Plachimada, was a small rural hamlet in Palakkad district of Kerala in which agriculture (mainly rice cultivation) played a crucial role in the rural economy. Adivasis, the main segment of population in this area were engaged in agriculture for their subsistence and most of them were agricultural labourers before setting up the Coca Cola plant. However, agriculture in this region did not generate surplus nor did it offer wage employment throughout the year. The district Palakkad was often identified as one of the drought affected districts in Kerala during 1980s and 1990s. Agriculture faced crisis primarily due to climatic conditions along with other economic and political reasons. Thus, the establishment of the Coca Cola plant needs to be historically contextualised by considering the factors such as agrarian crisis, economic reforms, and notion and practice of development through industrialisation.

In this context, indeed it is necessary to briefly review the concept neo-liberalism and how it became a dominant discourse within the domain of development and governance. It is also important to look at the way Indian state is linked to this economic and political process and its impact on our national and sub-national; particularly Kerala’s socio-economic life is a striking example of this process against the backdrop of the establishment of the Coca Cola plant at Plachimada. The study also historically contextualises the emergence of Plachimada movement. Harvey defines:

Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating

individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices (2005, 2).

Neo-liberalism is a political and economic practice in which free market plays the significant and hegemonic role over all other institutions. The world, mainly Europe and America turned to the paradigm of neo-liberalism by the mid 1970s. The three important features of neoliberalism are “deregulation, privatisation and withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision” (3). A fundamental transition in Indian economic policies towards neo-liberalism took place in the early 1990s. Much has been discussed about these transitions from different vantage points; some have extensively written to provide a theoretical and empirical rationale for this shift (See for example, Jalan 1991; Bhagwati and Srinivasan 1993; World Bank Country Study 1995; Ahluwalia and Little 1998). A few others critiqued the anti-poor growth and development paradigm embedded in it (See Kurian 1994; Rao and Linnemann 1996; Patnaik 1997). A brief discussion on economic and political context of this transition in order to situate the arrival of a multinational company (MNC) like Coca Cola is discussed here which helps to historically contextualise the Plachimada movement.

The proponents of the New Economic Policy (NEP) or neo-liberal policies argued that India adopted the NEP to overcome the macroeconomic and microeconomic crisis situation encountered in the late 1980s. The macroeconomic crisis refers to “both internally (the fiscal deficit) and externally (the balance of payment crunch) produced while the microeconomic crisis signifies serious efficiency and incentive failures” (Chakrabarti and Cullenberg 2003, 239). This has been conceived as the great

impediment to the economic growth and “development logic of industrialisation through capital accumulation” (240) by the neoclassical economists in India. This is supposed to have ensured transition from an economy regulated by the state to free market domination over the economy. Consequently, since 1990 India had confronted the unwarranted lacuna between the neoliberal rhetoric with respect to economic growth, progress and development of the society on one hand and the growing vulnerable conditions of the common people in India on the other. Various scholars meticulously examined the impact of neoliberal economic reforms in India. For instance, Patnaik (1997, 3133) argues that “many economic and social indicators suggest that not only is the level of absolute poverty in India high, there has also been an adverse impact of neoliberal policies on poverty”. By critiquing the rationale and the validity of the parameters to measure poverty in India which has been administered by the official system and many individual academics, she precisely argues that “the official estimate of rural poverty is 28.3 per cent for the year 2004-2005”. Contradictory to this official estimate, Patnaik's direct appraisal provides 87 per cent of the persons are below the poverty line.

Similarly, Kurien (1994) Rao and Linneman's (1996) discussed the impact of neoliberal reforms on the poor. These studies brought out the significant rise in absolute poverty in villages in the post reform period. In India the post liberalisation period denotes unprecedented control of land from poor by the state for establishing special economic zones (SEZ), IT parks, mines, dams, infrastructure, highways, power plants etc. As a result, India witnessed various forms of collective action against the state to protect the interests of the corporate capitalism.

Though the economic reforms were inaugurated in India in the early 1990s, Kerala did not adopt any reforms during that period. This is the reason Bajpai and Sachs (1999) connoted negatively and included Kerala under the category of “lagging reformers” (2) in their three-fold classification of states. Contrary to this, Kerala followed a different development trajectory compared to the national development trajectory. This has been widely classified as ‘Kerala model’ of development. In the early 1990s, many scholars (See for instance George 1993; Oommen 1993; Prakash 1994; Tornquist and Tharakan 1995; Ramachandran 1997; Heller 1999; Parayil 1996 and 2000) critically reflected on the crisis embedded in this Kerala model. The alarming rate of unemployment, low income generation, poor investment in economic sectors and the stagnant material production had adversely affected the economic growth of the state. At this juncture, an *International Congress on Kerala Studies* (hereafter ICKS) was organised under the auspices of AKG Centre for Research and Studies, Thiruvananthapuram.<sup>113</sup> The thrust behind the organisation of this congress summarised by Issac and Tharakan (1995) in the following words:

There is a growing feeling that a new agenda responsive to the changed reality needs to be drawn up, so that the new challenges can be met, the progressive heritage preserved and the cultural and material life of the people further improved (1993).

According to them, the central focus of the discussion at the ICKS “was more on the contemporary crisis and the possible solution rather than on the much acclaimed

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<sup>113</sup> This is a research centre which was established by Communist Party of India Marxist (CPIM) with the objective of conducting study and research on relevant contemporary topics.



achievements of the past” (Ibid, 1995). As a part of it, ICKS emphasised a new agenda for achieving future development of Kerala while acknowledging that it is impossible to design a paradigm of development which is totally independent of the development policy of the central government particularly, in the post reform period. This notion was also shared by E M S Namboodirippad<sup>114</sup> in his presidential address in the Congress. He pointed out:

Within the limitations imposed by the global and national structures, we will have to find practical solutions to the problems that our state faces. We cannot let the present situation drift, we have got to reach a consensus as to what measures are to be adopted to accelerate economic growth without sacrificing the welfare gains and the democratic achievements of the past (1994, 5).

All these deliberations indicated that the beginning of 1990s exerted a huge pressure on the state to overcome the ‘development crisis’. However, Jeromi (2005) observed that the state lagged behind almost a decade compared to the reforms initiated by the central government. Given the insights from ICKS, the left front government which was in power during 1996-2001 adopted various practical measures to resolve this crisis. In which the two important measures were to stimulate private investment and diversify the industrial base. Hence, the arrival of Hindustan Coca Cola Beverages Ltd can be linked to the above developments and policy shift in Kerala. The Coca Cola officials revealed this fact before the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) that “the company came in at the specific request from LDF government...It was promised all infrastructure facilities, power, and water” (Cited in Nair, Paul and Menon 2008, 117).

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<sup>114</sup> He was the first communist chief minister of Kerala after the formation of Kerala as a separate state and also the theoretician and former national general secretary of CPIM.

Paradoxically, one could say that the initiative for industrial development and economic growth was conceived without considering environmental impact. This process led to the capitalist appropriation of natural resources including land and water by the multinational company while the local resistance revolved around this exploitation. This is quite evident with the narration by one of the women agitators. She said:

“Coca Cola plant is now situated at the agricultural land of our big land owner, Thambi Ravuthar. We, the people in the nearest areas of this village are engaged in agricultural activities in this land both day and night. There was reasonably good employment available in this area. In the mean time Thambi Ravuthar fell into a deep debt therefore, he sold the land. Before leaving the place he told us not to worry with the loss of agricultural land since a big company has come here in this land and all of us will get jobs. Unfortunately, this did not happen. Even the educated youth in this locality didn't get job in the company. Most of the labourers appointed in the company are outsiders and the rest of them are the followers and sympathisers of various political parties”.<sup>115</sup>

One of the reporters of Madyamam daily, the only news paper which published the initial reports of the establishment of the Coca Cola plant at Plachimada prior to launching the agitation, narrated the story of the inception of the factory as follows:

The multinational company Coca Cola had taken the land during the period 1998-1999 at Plachimada, the area where the poorest of the poor adivasis were densely populated. The company had purchased 33.3 acres of land from 5 persons with the help of local real estate agents. They were filling up of paddy fields with sand which was used for the cultivation of paddy two times in a year (*Iruppuval*). We, Mathrubhumi's Chittur reporter and myself (Madhyamam's reporter), went there as local reporters to enquire about it.<sup>116</sup>

These two narrations indicate how the Coca Cola company appropriated land without much coercive power. In this context it is significant to look at Harvey's (2003) critical examination of Marx's classical idea of 'primitive accumulation'. He revisits the basic

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<sup>115</sup> Interview with the respondent, 17 June, 2010.

<sup>116</sup> 'Plachimada: This was the beginning of agitation' a small write up written by Chittur S Das in Keraleeyam Magazine, July 2006, 6-7.

assumption on which the idea of ‘primitive accumulation’ proposed by Marx. By invoking a critical re-evaluation of these assumptions, Harvey found some serious limitations in applying the same ideas in the current neo-liberal context. Therefore, he observed that “they [the assumptions of primitive accumulation] relegates accumulation based upon predation, fraud, and violence to an ‘original stage’ that is considered no longer relevant...as being somehow ‘outside of’ capitalism as a closed system” (144). This is the context in which he replaced the idea of ‘primitive’ and ‘original’ by using a more revised conceptualisation that was termed as “accumulation by dispossession”. By referring to Marx, Harvey summarised different processes encompassed in ‘primitive accumulation’. Here, I focused only on the most relevant aspects pertaining to the Plachimada movement. The most important among the wide range of processes Harvey was talking about the “colonial, neo-colonial, and imperial processes of appropriation of assets (including natural resources)” (145). I find that this idea is still pertinent to understand how Coca Cola Company appropriated the land. Though Marx only discussed about the coercive appropriation of assets including natural resources, Harvey extended and reformulated that assumption by proposing a more nuanced idea of how a neo-liberal economy operates with coercion and non-coercion intertwined in complex ways. As we know, state plays a crucial role in connection with the processes of primitive accumulation. Most often, the state was identified with, as Harvey rightly pointed out, “its monopoly of violence and definitions of legality” (Ibid). In the light of these discussions, if we revisit the establishment of Coca Cola plant in Plachimada we could observe two important things. One, the state government (under the rule of Left Front) invited Coca Cola to Kerala by ensuring all support including infrastructure within legal

provisions. Second, Coca Cola was able to purchase land without using any coercion. Hence, I argue that the processes of accumulation took place without enforcing any overt power. Hence, it is different from the Marx's notion of the imperial processes of appropriation of assets; rather Harvey's conceptualisation is more helpful to explain this phenomenon. Here 'accumulation by dispossession' doesn't mean that adivasis were displaced from their land since they were not the owners of land purchased by the Coca Cola plant. But they dispossessed the adivasis from their work sites (agricultural land) without having to absorb them as factory workers. In other words, local agricultural labourers, mainly adivasis became unemployed due to the appropriation of agricultural land by the Coca Cola Company.

In this peculiar context, it is worth considering Sanyal's (2007) conceptualisation of development and postcolonial capitalism by revisiting the idea of 'primitive accumulation' in order to explain the dispossessed or dislocated status of adivasis in Plachimada. In his seminal work *Rethinking Capitalist Development: Primitive Accumulation, Governmentality and Postcolonial Capitalism* (2007), he attempted to theorise post-colonial capitalism and offered a new political economy of post-colonial capitalism. As a part of this attempt, he raised the question of how and why a significant segment of the population "in the postcolonial world remains excluded from the 'modern and dynamic' economy governed by the logic of capital". His theoretical endeavour was a radical move to critically rethink about the "capitalist development in the postcolonial world" (IX).

According to him, in the conventional understanding of capitalism, we normally conceive capitalism as a composition of both capitalist and non-capitalist dimensions. Unlike this,

he proposed a “diachronic account of the capital–non-capital complex in terms of the two-sided process of destruction and creation of non-capital” (2007, 40). Before I embark on his conceptualisation of postcolonial capitalism, let me briefly enunciate how Kalyan Sanyal situated the contemporary manifestation of capitalism in general. For him, the dominant discourses which explained capitalism with reference to two prominent characteristics – free market and private property – is highly problematic. He observed that “private property and the market are both requirements for capitalism, but they alone do not make a system capitalistic”. Besides, he argues that “...the combination of the market and private property does not rule out non-capitalist production” (Ibid, 3).

Sanyal has problematised the dominant view of capitalism by raising a critical question: *“Isn’t it possible to see capitalism as necessarily a complex of capitalist and non-capitalist production residing in the commodity space? In other words, can’t we see capitalist development as process that necessarily produces, brings into existence, non-capitalistic economic processes in its own course?”* (7, Italics in original). The answer to this question constitutes the central argument of his book where he conceptualises “capitalist development as a process that in its own course produces pre-capital”. He recognizes two simultaneous processes result in “primitive accumulation”. On one hand, he argues that “the process of primitive accumulation leads to the destruction of the pre-capitalist sectors” and on the other, it concomitantly “produces a space that necessitates the recreation of those sectors”.

He concludes, “pre-capital’s conditions of existence flow from the internal logic of the expanded reproduction of capital”. Thus, according to him, “pre-capital constitutes an internal ‘other’ of capital and the possibility of capital superseding the pre-capital

becomes a theoretical impossibility” is the major characteristic feature of the political economy of post-colonial capitalism (39). Subsequently, he discusses the three major theoretical implications of this reading on the political economy of post-colonial capitalism. Rather than getting into that debate in detail, it is necessary to mention that, as per this conceptualization the prefix *pre* in the gesture pre-capital is replaced by *non*. Consequently, he proposes that “the ‘other’ of capital is now non-capital which articulates itself with capital, and the institution of market constitutes the space in which the articulation resides” (Ibid). On the basis of this understanding he puts his key argument on capitalist development in the following:

*The conceptualization of post-colonial capital in terms of this complex amounts to saying that transition in the historicist sense has already occurred and what we have is capitalism with an inherent heterogeneity. Capitalist development in this scenario means not a structural shift from non-capital to capital, but the development of the entire capital–non-capital complex. (40, Italics in original).*

Given this, let me examine to what extent this argument can be validated in connection with the appropriation of land by the global capitalist enterprise, Coca Cola and its impact on the life of the local people, especially adivasis in Plachimada. On one aspect we agree with Sanyal that this appropriation creates a non-capital ‘other’ which represents the unemployed and dispossessed adivasis as agricultural labourers. However, it doesn’t create ‘non-capital’ as a production site as he explained in the above conceptualisation. So what I found interesting is his description about the condition of people who are located in the space of this non-capital ‘other’. According to him:

Bereft of any direct access to means of labour, the dispossessed are left only with labour power, but their exclusion from the space of commodity production does not allow them to turn their labour power into a commodity. They are condemned to the world of the excluded, the redundant, the dispensable, having nothing to lose, not even the chains of wage-slavery.

Primitive accumulation of capital thus produces a vast wasteland inhabited by people whose lives as producers have been subverted and destroyed by the thrust of the process of expansion of capital, but for whom the doors of the world of capital remain forever closed (53).

The above observation is highly appropriate in explaining the condition of adivasis after setting up of Coca Cola plant in Plachimada. One of the central themes of this study is that *marginality* can be equated with Sanyal's term *wasteland* where the lives of adivasis as agricultural labourers have been sabotaged and destroyed by the global expansion of capital through Coca Cola Company. Following Sanyal, one can say that the adivasis are "condemned to the world of excluded, the redundant, the dispensable, having nothing to lose, not even the chains of wage-slavery" (Ibid). However, it slightly contradicts with his earlier assumption where he articulates the capital and non-capital complex with reference to the dual process of destruction and creation of non-capital. On the whole, I agree with Sanyal's conceptualisation in understanding the complexity of the expansion of global capital to a regional and local location like Plachimada though it seems difficult to validate the argument about the creation of non-capital 'other' as a production site by referring to Plachimada experience.

### **Plachimada: Interface between Global Capitalism and Local Resistance**

From the above accounts, one can argue that Plachimada as a locality had become an object of the operations of capital. In this backdrop, considering Plachimada as a specific case I shall make an attempt in this section to understand the meaning of the local and global and its relationality. Here, Plachimada constitutes 'local' and what implies this local has already been discussed in the previous chapter. Similarly, I have already

explained the rationale of choosing the locality like Plachimada in order to establish a global capitalist enterprise like Coca-Cola. To put it more conceptually,

Plachimada was identified as a site of backwardness, absence of enough growth and progress, a habitat of predominantly adivasis with traditional values and beliefs thus, it calls for the so called ‘development’ without delay both in the discourses of developmentalist state as well as in the perspective of global corporate capital. Indeed, Coca Cola also chose Plachimada because it recognised it as a locality of having abundant ground water. The latter factor was the prime motivation of Coca Cola to extend their network to a remote rural locality in Kerala nevertheless they put this fact out of public sight. Even though they concealed this fact from public sight it is not a difficult to make a corresponding connection with this to the statement made by the company in the early 1990s. In the beginning of 1990s Coca-Cola openly stated that “we are not a multinational, we are a multi-local” (Cited in Morley 1991, 15). This statement clearly illustrates how local has been envisioned in their capitalist interests.

On the other hand, when we look at how Plachimada as a locality has been perceived in the popular imagination just before setting up of the Coca Cola plant, it could be seen that this was not much different from the perception of the developmentalist state. Conversely, a distinct perception can also be exemplified in the below quoted conversation between a ward member, named Bhaskaran and Mayilamma, an adivasi woman and a leader of the Plachimada movement.<sup>117</sup> Vijayanagar colony located in ward

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<sup>117</sup> All the below quoted conversations are taken from Mayilamma’s autobiographical narratives (2006, 10-11) compiled in Malayalam and a free and loose translation of the conversation has been done by the researcher.



number five and the member of this ward Mr. Bhaskaran said to Mayilamma when he met her once:

Mayilamma, a big company is coming to our ward soon. It would be a great relief especially for the people like you who have been working very hard in muddy and filthy conditions for a long. At least you can work without affecting rain and sunlight. Moreover, some people will get job also.

Then, Mayilamma replied:

It's not right Bhaskaretta.<sup>118</sup> If this company is coming to our place, it will spoil us. They are coming to our place to destroy our water. For me, there is a specific reason to say this. I heard that there was a soda company set up around 10 kilo meters away from here at Amrampalayam in Tamil Nadu. In which one person belongs to our community (adivasis) was working. There were four or five bore well set up inside the company. Here if we dig a little below the surface, we will get water whereas in those areas the machine has dug on the ground at a deeper level. Therefore, the machine has extracted water from all the nearest streams. What happened ultimately? They usually cultivated rice, corn, cora and cumb and engaged in the harvest two times in a year has been reduced to once in a year due to the water shortage. Later, getting water even once has also become difficult. Subsequently, drought had affected that area. A well educated *counten* (Tamilan) told to our person that the establishment of the company was responsible for that damage. This was the basic reason of our fear when member shared about the arrival of the company.

As a response to this anxiety and fear, member replied:

It won't happen. There are other solutions if there is a water shortage happened; pipe/tap or tanker lorry water supply. First and foremost, company has to come. The most important thing is to get jobs for our children. In spite of all these it would be a pride for us to say that such a big company is coming to our panchayat.

From the above conversation it is clearly evident that the ward member carries a modernist teleological notion of development whereas Mayilamma, expressed her anxiety and fear about the destructive implications of this development paradigm by invoking the experiences of the local people. In a more careful analysis indeed, she was reminding

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<sup>118</sup> You can see the name end with a usage *ettan* which is a popular gesture in Malayalam for calling elder people with respect.

about the ecological, social and political consequences of this development in her own native expressions and gestures. Here local doesn't mean that an unchallenging and unsophisticated terrain rather we can see that the local implies two opposing views in connection with development. Paradoxically, the view represented by the ward member (broadly the views of the politicians and decision makers) dominates over the other marginalised voices represented by Mayilamma. In this context, the establishment of Coca-Cola refers to the arrival of global capitalism though I disagree with some of the discourses around the homogenisation thesis around global capitalism. In the experiences of Plachimada it clearly exemplifies how global capitalism reshapes the local against the requirement of a postcolonial condition or in other words it ensures a kind of synergy with the already existing postcolonial capitalism to further appropriate and exploit the resources of these kinds of local societies.

Subsequently, when we go along with the trajectory of Plachimada movement that I mapped in the previous chapter it could be seen that a new local is emerging through movement activism. This local can be identified as a site of resistance. In this context, let me reproduce certain narratives of Mayilamma. She recollected about the agitation in the following words:

We are fighting for the right to get water for drinking and bathing. Nobody is supporting the attempts to pollute the drinking water and its excessive extraction even in terms of employment opportunities. It not only affects the present generation but it will create difficulties for the future generation. We never expected that this much problem the company will create when they started functioning. Water has become contaminated and unusable for drinking and bathing within six months after the establishment of the company. Therefore, we decided to fight against the Coca Cola Company who are denying our basic right for water (Keraleeyam 2005, 18).

Further she narrated on the reasons to launch the agitation at Plachimada against Coca

Cola Company in the following:

They came to our village with glittering offers; that our people would get many job opportunities in the plant; the overall development of our village would be taken care of; the economic growth of the area would be strengthened etc. We waited and waited... nothing miraculous happened. On the contrary, six months went by, slowly we started facing the reverse effects. Except a few, nobody from the locality was given jobs. The water level in the wells of the surrounding colonies showed a sharp depletion. The quality of the water -its odour, taste, hardness- got worsened. It became non-potable. We stopped using it. We were forced to fetch water from a distance of three to five kilometres. Several uncommon diseases started showing their neck out. The farmers around the plant stopped cultivation due to severe shortage of water. This was another thunderbolt on us that took away our daily little earnings. We were forced to migrate to faraway lands, seeking for some work or other to make our living. Suddenly we felt terribly helpless, facing the fact that we were being robbed. Our precious water resource had been stolen... lakhs of litres every day... Where would I get some fresh and pure drinking water anymore? How many kilometer should we have to walk to fetch a drop of water? Who will compensate the heavy loss incurred upon us by this giant plant?<sup>119</sup>

Both these narratives implied a new notion of agency in the context of local. These are reactions to a predicament resulted through the practices of development conceived within postcolonial capitalism. As we can see that Mayilamma's above concern is not merely about the present generation but it concerned also about the future. To interpret it further, I also find it quite interesting of what Dirlik has observed about a similar condition given below. According to him:

Above all, however, what is likely to give these concerns lasting power is that they express the demands not just of the powerless victims of development, although this is significant enough, but of formerly powerless groups who have acquired new power by virtue of the process of development itself, who now seek to redefine it in accordance with their own interests and perception (1997, 88).

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<sup>119</sup> Source: <http://plachimada.wordpress.com/2008/01/19/a-tribute-to-mylamma>.

Akin to this observation, we could recognise that the people in the locality of Plachimada, predominantly adivasis, are gaining a new consciousness about how they have been subjected to the exploitation of global capital as part of the establishment and further operation of the Coca Cola Company. Hence, following Dirlik I argue that this consciousness is not a sign of powerlessness instead it manifests a new power which is different from what has been known among these people especially adivasis “...who demand recognition of their social existence and consciousness” (90). This development model – ‘Kerala model of development’ – constituted within the larger frame of modernity failed to cognize their historical and political presence.

Now, by way of conclusion of this section I argue that once Plachimada was identified as a local that was emblematic of marginality has been transformed as a space of “critical locality” as a consequence of this movement not by rejecting the idea of local but through a reassertion of local. In this reassertion, local tried to express its own ideas, identity and complete control over their natural resources. By which they suggest an alternative vision of development and a resistance against global capitalism. Further it should be noted that the idea of “critical locality” need to be distinguished from the categories such as local, locality, community, adivasis, indigeneity etc. Here past is always a reference point though not an uncritical social space of kindness and benevolence to simply go back. Rather, past and present are equally subjected to critical evaluation informed by the lived experiences of the people who have been oppressed and excluded (marginality) from the trajectory of the capitalist development. Thus, local in the case of Plachimada as a site of interrogation – means interrogating marginality – “invention and construction” as a

promise to build an equitable future by rejecting global capital and seeking global support.

### **Discourses on Environmental Movements in India: The Case of Plachimada**

Plachimada movement is broadly designated as an environmental movement by considering the distinctiveness of the issues which has been brought forth by the movement and the varied social actors associated with this movement at different phases of the agitation. A detailed analysis of environmental aspects of the Plachimada movement needs to be located against the larger theoretical discourses of the concept of environment and the way environmental movements have been perceived by different scholars in India.

In the second half of 1990s, Guha and Martinez-Alier came up with the idea of “environmentalism of the poor” while they are discussing the different strands of environmentalism. By making a comparison between environmentalism in the first and third world, Guha argues that in our societies poor people and marginalised communities are the prime victims of environmental degradation whereas the situation in the first world is totally different. Therefore, these people and communities connect with social activists who are having experience and education “to negotiate the politics of protest” constitute the principal feature of environmental struggles in India (1997, 12). In his framework, “environmentalism of the poor”, Guha termed these people and communities as “ecosystem people” who are basically fighting for their subsistence and survival by protecting the natural resources which they largely depend on the hands of “omnivores”;

mainly constituted by the individuals and social groups who are having power to capture natural resources (Ibid).

In one of her essays, Amita Baviskar (2009) contested Ramachandra Guha's above noted conceptualisation of Indian environmental movements. She firmly argues that "the defining feature of 'environmental movements' in India is not that they represent an 'environmentalism of the poor', but that they emerge through collaborations with middle-class actors and audiences" (161). When we examine the literature on the history and evolution of Indian environmental movements one could understand that the proposition "environmentalism of the poor" has been built with reference to social movements such as Chipko, Narmada, Chilika Bachao Andolan (Movement to save Chilika lake), the Kerala Fish Workers Forum, the mobilisation against Eucalyptus plantations on common land in Karnataka. Amita Baviskar reaches the above mentioned key argument by examining and revisiting the present transitions of the movements such as – Chipko Movement, Narmada Movement – and also Adivasi Mukti Sangathan (Tribal Liberation Organisation) in Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh Mines Shramik Sang (Workers Union) in the eastern part of Madhya Pradesh.

On the basis of this contemporary status and analysis she observes that "the so called environmental movements bring together social groups with diverse class back grounds and even contradictory structural locations, whose practices sometimes do not even exemplify ecological sustainability" (Ibid, 170). In the backdrop of these notions she finds that the propositions, "environmentalism of the poor" and "environmentalism of the rich" are interconnected instead of locating it as contradictory, which was done by Ramachandra Guha. Hence, according to her view any attempt to define the nature of an

environmental movement in reference to the single social categories like class, race or gender will become reductive and what “we need to appreciate its ideological hybridity and the ways in which the tensions and contradictions between different, unequal groups are negotiated”.

Against the backdrop of these discourses on environmentalism and environmental movements in India, I attempt to make sense of the origin and transition of Plachimada movement through various phases. It could be seen that Plachimada was a conglomeration of various organisations since the beginning. Even though the adivasis in Vijayanagar and Plachimada colonies have stood up in the forefront of the agitation, the involvement of Adivasi Samrakshana Samithi, Haritha Development Association and People’s Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) was overtly visible when they launched the agitation on April 22, 2002. It indicates the presence of middle class actors ever since the beginning of the agitation. But some of the studies, particularly the research study carried out by Panikkar (2008) argued that Plachimada movement was an adivasi agitation in the first phase and civil society actors and outsiders associated with the movement in later phases. As far as the empirical data which I have collected as part of my field work on Plachimada movement gives a different picture. I could even find the involvement of civil society actors before the formal launching of Plachimada agitation. For instance, *Adivasi Samrakshana Samithi* was an organisation working among the adivasis in Plachimada before the launching of anti-Coca Cola agitation. The patron of this organisation was Mr. Vilayodi Venugopal, a voluntary activist belongs to a non-adivasi community. At that time, he was also an active worker of PUCL and the state secretary of it during 2003-05 periods though it was very weak in Kerala. His involvement in

launching the agitation indicates the following empirical data which I have collected from multiple sources. Let me reproduce the data here again:

The pollution of drinking water had become a severe problem by January 2002. The bore well which was set up by the Coca Cola Company in Plachimada colony is not able to start its function due to the scarcity of water. The inhabitants of Vijayanagar colony approached the contractor in Coca Cola plant to get any jobs despite the fact that they are not getting water. Unfortunately, they received with abusive responses and dishonoured by the political representatives while they are discussing about the new job openings in the Plant at that time. They also met the manger of the plant and discussed about the matter although he responded that the pollution is a quite normal thing in a factory like this. This incident provoked the inhabitants of Vijayanagar colony in Palakkad and they realized that the closure of the Cola factory is the solution if they want to live at Plachimada further.

In this juncture, the people particularly adivasis in Vijayanagar and Plachimada colonies seriously thought about an agitation against Cola factory. They contacted Vilayodi Venugopal<sup>120</sup> and some others to begin the agitation. Subsequently they mobilized the adivasis and local people and organized a road blockade in order to get drinking water under the leadership of Vilayodi Venugopal, Arumughan Pathichira, Velur Swaminathan and Kannadasan.’ This is considered as the beginning of Plachimada agitation before it formally launched on April 22, 2002.<sup>121</sup>

Another example of the involvement of civil society and middle class actors depicts the following passage from a leaflet published at the beginning of the agitation by six organisations jointly which was titled *Picketing against Coca Cola should make a Success*. In which they had narrated the problem existed in Plachimada in the following manner:

The people in Plachimada had experienced the adverse impacts of the operation of the Coca Cola plant within one year since its establishment. The level of ground water had been decreased considerably and the pure well-

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<sup>120</sup> He is a non-adivasi voluntary social worker. His activities are maily concentrated among the adivasi colonies at Perumatty, Pattancherry and Muthalamada Village Panchayats. He was the patron of *Adivasi Samrakshana Sangam* at that time.

<sup>121</sup> I have collected this information from Madyamam daily and Keraleeyam magazine and validated through the interviews with the agitators.



water had become salty. The local people didn't consider it very seriously since they believed that it is a natural phenomenon. In the subsequent days the taste of the water became worse and it had become unusable for drinking. The water has become precipitated when it is boiled and it is becoming like gruel water when it shook. Rice and pulses are not able to cook in this water. The boiled rice is becoming worse within six hours after cooking. The taste of the water has changed which is not able to boil and it is having foul smell, taste and it has also become very hard.....The company has distributed the sludge waste from the plant to some of the farmers in free of cost but for others they sold it for Rs. 120 to 150 per one load. The innocent village farmers deposited this sludge waste in their farm lands without knowing the consequences of this and realized that their well water has become salty and polluted once the rainy season started.....Hence we request to the common people, political parties, social and cultural organizations, factory labourers, and agricultural labourers to support the agitation by demanding that the cola company in Plachimada should close down since they are responsible for the pollution of our surroundings and to pay compensation for 1000 families who are the victims of this pollution.<sup>122</sup>

The language of the leaflet in Malayalam, its style of narration and articulation of the problem clearly signifies the involvement of the civil society actors since the beginning of the agitation. In other words, if I borrow a usage of Guha from the above mentioned work, "the politics of negotiation" implied in the above text undoubtedly exemplifies the involvement of the civil society and middle class actors in the agitation since the beginning. Hence I argue that it is completely baseless to claim that Plachimada movement was merely an adivasi agitation at the beginning. On the other hand, it is significant to note that the presence and degree of involvement of civil society actors which has changed the subsequent phases of the agitation.

A thorough examination of the organisational form, leadership, repertoire of contentions, collective action frames and collective identity of the social actors associated with Plachimada movement reveals the fact that this was a movement that emerged from the grass root local society with the support of civil society actors. The movement in fact

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<sup>122</sup> This is a free and loose translation of the leaflet which was published in Malayalam that I have collected from the field.

began with a focus on a limited or single issue that was pollution and scarcity of drinking water. But later this local issue was connected to a larger global process of capitalism and consequently, many other aspects like the issue of globalisation, communities' and local people's power over natural resources, grass root democracy etc got integrated into the movement when it has moved to other phases.

The direct victims of the establishment of Coca Cola Company, particularly the adivasis conceived that pollution and scarcity of drinking water is a natural phenomenon hence they generally didn't take it as a serious matter. But gradually when they experienced that the water available in that area was unusable for cooking and also caused skin and respiratory diseases. This direct experience equipped them to assume that the establishment of the Coca Cola factory at Plachimada might be the reasons for the decreasing quality of water and its scarcity. This assumption got strengthened when they got acquainted with some of the experiences – mainly through the civil society actors – which pointed out about the pollution generated by the Coca Cola plant.

Plachimada movement is a convergence of various organisations and political parties. In the beginning of the agitation there was no support from the mainstream political parties; only a few civil society actors and organisations supported. Subsequently, in later phases Plachimada movement attained the support of a wide variety of local, sub-national, national and global organisations, independent social actors and individuals. Rather than seeing it as an “ideological hybridity” (Baviskar), I prefer to look at this conglomeration by using the idea “logic of equivalence” and “logic of difference” advocated by Laclau (1985; 1990). The concept “logic of equivalence” meant that the people and organisations having different subject positions temporarily construct a nodal point on any particular

issue without completely setting aside their particular subject position although, they will not try to make a domination over each other's subject position. This observation is extremely important to explain the conglomeration happened in Plachimada movement. Pollution and water scarcity was the 'nodal point' where all of them joint together and constructed "logic of equivalence" in the case of Plachimada movement and demanded the closure of the Coca Cola plant and compensation for the people who were victimised as part of its operation in Plachimada.

### **Scientific Knowledge, 'Truth' and Development vs Lived Experience of the People**

Various expert committees and state departments and institutions have undertaken studies on the issues of pollution and excessive extraction of water by the Coca Cola plant, which are the basic reasons to launch the agitation against the Cola plant in Plachimada. These studies increased the complexity of the issue raised by the Plachimada movement. Many of the reports published by the state departments and institutions had not established any direct link between the operation of Coca Cola plant in Plachimada and the pollution of drinking water and water scarcity at the beginning. This is a movement launched on the basis of the local, everyday lived experience<sup>123</sup> of the people, particularly adivasis and their commonsensical assumptions. Most often, the state institutions such as court, various government departments like ground water, pollution control board and legislative assembly considered the 'so called' expert and scientific knowledge is more

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<sup>123</sup> Here the term 'lived experience' is used in a phenomenological sense. This view recognises that "there is no element of choice or freedom associated with it". Thus, "lived experience is not just about living any experience..." rather it "should be used only for those experiences that are seen as *necessary*, experiences over which the subject has no choice of whether to experience or not" (Sarukkai 2012, 34-35).

authentic and legitimate and completely neglected the lived experience and experiential knowledge of the people.

The official and legal sources commonly agreed that an in-depth and scientific study is inevitable to find out the reasons of the pollution and shortage of water and why it has been continuing in the village of Plachimada. Thus we could see that this proposition is an indication of an inquiry to find out the 'truth' based on scientific objectivity without considering local people's grievance as valid. Therefore, often the state institutions and their inquiry to find out truth uncritically accepts the epistemic authority of science in producing authentic knowledge and validating it by completely neglecting the everyday experience of the people. Consequently, they decided that the people's assumptions and allegations against the Coca Cola plant in Plachimada can be validated only through scientific studies by ensuring its truth value and scientific objectivity. This raised a great challenge before the social activists and adivasis who have been leading the agitation against Coca Cola Company in Plachimada. In this context, one could observe the constant tension in the Plachimada movement between the knowledge (in the forms of expert reports) constructed by the state institutions on one hand which is always claimed that it has scientific objectivity and people's direct and lived experience on the other. For explicating this point let me recapitulate four important narratives which will help us to unravel the above discussed tension more convincingly.

### ***Report One***

Water samples from the wells of Plachimada area have been collected by the medical officer of the Public Health Centre in the very beginning of the agitation and examined at

the Regional Analytical Laboratory, Kozhikode under the orders of the District Medical Officer. These examinations have revealed hardness, chlorides and concentration of total dissolved solids (TDS) beyond tolerable levels in drinking water. On the basis of it the medical officer of the Public Health Centre in the village had informed the Perumatty Grama Panchayat authorities that the people should not drink water from the three wells adjacent to the Coca Cola plant. But at the same time officially they didn't establish any direct link between the functioning of Coca Cola Company and the pollution of water.

### ***Report Two***

Likewise, R N Athavale, an emeritus scientist in the National Geographical Research Institute, Hyderabad conducted a study on the issue of water management in August 2002 at the request of the Company. In his report, he stated:

At my request, the management of Coca-Cola plant provided the following information:

In the production of one liter of beverage, they are required to use 3.75 liters of water. The total dissolved solids in the water in the beverage are required to be below 500 ppm. They use a reverse osmosis plant for the purpose. The reject from this plant and the water used in clearing and washing the bottles and other purposes is sent to the Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP). All the clean water coming out of the ETP is used for irrigating the lawns, shrubs and trees. No water is let out of the plant area.

The estimated water utilization figures for production year 2002 were 1,41,015 cubic meters (m<sup>3</sup>) out of which 37,604 m<sup>3</sup> will be exported outside the plant in the form of beverage. The plant uses 3.75 liters of water in producing 1 liter of beverage.

At maximum production capacity, the plant will annually require 2, 32,010 m<sup>3</sup> of water out of which 61,869 m<sup>3</sup> will be exported as beverage. However, the plant has never operated at this capacity. In general, it operates at 60% of the full capacity. (Cited in Nair, 2004).

### ***Report Three***

The ground water department of Kerala conducted an inquiry under the supervision of its director Mr. Balagangadharan Nair and he recommended that the government has to control the over exploitation of ground water by the Coca Cola Company. They found that the plant was using 5 lakh litres of water per day while they were conducting the study in 2003 and they suggested that it has to be limited as 3 lakh litres of water. This inquiry commission was appointed by the government in response to the agitation of the people against the company. Further, the report pointed out that although the company is taking 5 lakh litres of water, only 1.5 lakh litres are using for manufacturing cola and the rest is using for filtration and later is flowing into the agriculture fields. Hence the report argues that it will be helpful to reduce environmental impacts. In addition to this, they reported that the company has made necessary arrangements to collect and preserve rain water. The commission collected samples of water from 20 wells in the vicinity of the company and found that the level of water has come down only in four wells. However, they suggested that it required more scientific studies to prove that it caused due to the operation of the company. The report also added that in the year 2000, the locality which included Plachimada received 2200 millimetre; but in 2001 it has reduced to 600 millimetres. Hence, we need more scientific studies to validate that it has happened due to the establishment of the company.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Source: 'Report on the groundwater extraction in the Coca-Cola Factory, Plachimada, Palakkad District and water level trends in the area' prepared by State Groundwater Department, January 2003.

#### ***Report Four***

Let me quote from an interim report prepared and filed by the investigation team on May 11, 2004 based on the direction of the high court of Kerala before the High Court of Kerala. This investigation team was constituted by the Centre for Water Resources Development and Management (CWRDM) in Kerala and they were directed by the court to scientifically investigate about the allegation that the works of Coca Cola Company has resulted in the scarcity of drinking water in neighbouring areas of the plant. The report says:

The study has envisaged a scientific investigation on the ground water potential of the area and the shortage and scarcity of drinking water in the nearby areas due to the current level of groundwater extraction by the Coca-Cola factory. The duration of the project is for a period of one year. The Interim Report has been prepared based on the analysis of all available information pertaining to the study area and also additional data generated under the present study during the three months period from the start of the project.

Groundwater forms the main source of water in Chittur Block, and recharge to groundwater is predominantly from rainfall. The rain gauge in Chitturpuzha is in the Chittur Block of Palakkad District within which the Coca-Cola factory under consideration is also located. The rainfall data recorded at this rain gauge station shows the monsoon season (June to November) rainfall in both 2002 and 2003 has been much less than the mean value with the deviation from the mean as a percentage of the mean being lower than even –30 per cent. This deficiency in the rainfall and that too in two successive years can be considered to be the most significant factor that has contributed to the acute scarcity of water experienced in Chittur Block. The unregulated withdrawal of ground water from the wells within the Coca-Cola factory complex and also outside even during such a water deficit period had aggravated the water scarcity situation further.

The available annual groundwater resources in Chittur Block has been assessed by the Central Ground Water Board as 66.7 million cubic meters (MCM) on the basis of groundwater assessment guidelines approved by the Ministry of Water Resources, Government of India. This estimate of available groundwater applies for mean rainfall conditions. Domestic water supply forms the most important use of water in any area. Irrigation water supply is also crucially important in Chittur Block since agriculture forms the main economic activity there. The committed annual groundwater draft that needs to be reserved to meet the water requirements of both domestic and irrigation sectors in Chittur Block till 2025 AD can be very safely estimated as 62.5

MCM. This leaves an annual balance of about 4.2 MCM of groundwater resources for meeting other uses of water of which the requirement by Coca-Cola factory can be estimated as 0.1825 MCM (at the average rate of 5 lakh litres per day) which forms a little less than 5 per cent less than 5 per cent of 4.2 MCM. Hence, it can be very safely concluded that under normal rainfall conditions the planned groundwater withdrawal of 5 lakh litres per day by Coca-Cola factory will not adversely affect the availability of groundwater in and around the factory complex. However, groundwater withdrawal by Coca-Cola factory has been strictly controlled in those years in which the rainfall is much less than the mean value (The Interim Report, 1994, para. 1-3).

In these reports, the last three reports characterised the professed nature of the ‘scientific report’ which has taken the information offered by the Coca Cola officials as granted and incorporated in the report. This process can be illuminated by using a phrase suggested by Nandy (1998, 1) that “science” is becoming the “reason of state”. Thus, in the contemporary context it creates a complex nexus between sciences, state and multinational companies. Subsequently, the above noted second and third reports on water management is an example of how modern scientists (it doesn’t mean all) create legitimacy for the philosophy of the destructive practice of development in the contemporary Indian society. In short, local knowledge and lived experience are disqualified in favour of a scientific discourse that we have seen not free from power relations. Further, this exposes the connection between knowledge and power. Here, scientific knowledge “encodes a structure of domination and violence” (Visvanathan, 1998, 258). In the context of Plachimada this domination and violence was translated to a local society through development discourse. This is the circumstances in which Foucault’s postulation on knowledge and power acquires more significance. In the beginning of 1980s, he talked about the intricate connection between knowledge and power where “the exercise of



power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power” (Foucault 1980, 52).

As far as Foucault is concerned, power is capable to create knowledge in two different ways though related. On one hand, particular institutions of power create certain forms of knowledge historically possible and on the other, “institutions of power determine the conditions under which scientific statements come to be counted as true or false” (Hacking 1986)<sup>125</sup>. In the light of these discussions it is possible to see that the powerful institutions and departments created the conditions in which the above noted reports and statements considered as the objective scientific report and eventually projected as the final truth. In that sense this is a part of the process of ‘governmentalisation’. According to Foucault, the art of governing began in the Western Europe since 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century and later it proliferated into different realism of life which include “how to govern children, how to govern the poor and beggars, how to govern a family, a house, how to govern armies, different groups, city states,.. ” (2007, 43). He termed this process of governing is “governmentalisation”. But interestingly Foucault observes that this kind of governmentalisation cannot be dissociated from the question of “how not to be governed”? This notion of not being governed implied a set of actions including an act of defiance, as a challenge, as a way limiting these arts of governing and sizing them up, transforming them, of finding a way to escape from them or, in any case, a way of displace them, with a basic trust etc. This implied a different notion of power that is going beyond the conventional understanding of power concerned only about ‘sovereignty’ and ‘legitimacy’. This understanding of power has great significance in

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<sup>125</sup> Cited in Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

perceiving the counter discourses of Plachimada which effectively questioned the validity, truth value,<sup>126</sup> and legitimacy of the above noted reports as effects of power by frequently articulating their lived experiences concerned to pollution and scarcity of drinking water. Here, it is interesting to be noted that adivasis with the help of civil society actors and local representation of the state (that means village panchayat) produced a critical discourse on scientific objectivity and pressurised the sub-national state and its institutions to take up the scientific studies further until they establish the connection between the operation of the Coca Cola plant and the pollution and scarcity of drinking water. Finally, let me conclude this chapter by citing a crucial observation of the High Power Committee appointed by the government of Kerala as an exemplification of how the critical discourse of the movement positively influenced the recommendation of the committee. The committee in their report explained that they had compelling evidence (from several studies by legislative committees, the Supreme Court Monitoring Committee, scientific bodies as well as civil rights groups and concerned individuals) to conclude that “Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Private Ltd. has caused serious depletion of the water resources of Plachimada, and has severely contaminated the water and soil” (2010).<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> In this context, it is interesting to look at what Foucault tells us about ‘truth’. In his view, truth “is to be understood as a system of ordered procedure for the production, regulation, distribution and operation of statements” (1980, 133).

<sup>127</sup> See P. 245-47 of the previous chapter to know more details about the committee recommendations.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusion

Internal dynamics of the social movements – mainly aspects of mobilisation, organisation and strategies – have persistently been made the object of enquiry in studies on movements. Disparate from this, the present study centered on three themes, i.e. *marginality, development* and *agency* pertaining to AGMS and Plachimada, thus attempts to enrich the existing scholarship. This thesis makes an attempt to capture the varied meanings of the concepts marginality, development and agency as categories of analysis, using internal descriptions of the movements.

The social movement theories, particularly those since 1960s and the empirical studies which have been informed by these theories occupy a decisive space in the current sociological studies of social movements. However, the present study identifies that the social movement theories emerged in the Euro-American context will not be much useful in unfolding the complexities of social movements and collective actions emerged in a postcolonial society like India. For instance, the key premise in Meyer's (2004) conceptualisation of political process approach<sup>128</sup> cannot be validated in the context of the study of both AGMS and Plachimada. Perhaps, the theoretical constrain of this approach is also evident while looking at the social movements emerged in post 1990s. Most of these movements constituted their politics – which is coined as *political* in the present

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<sup>128</sup> The key premise underlying this approach according to Meyer was that “protest outside mainstream political institutions was closely tied to more conventional political activity” (2004, 127).

study – outside the domain of “mainstream political institutions”. However, the movements have constantly negotiated with these institutions to make them more pro-poor and egalitarian. At the same time, one could notice that their repertoire of contentions attains new forms and strategies in the process of that negotiation. For example, the build hut agitations, Muthanga struggle, standing up protest, attempts to capture the assets of Coca Cola Company are such efforts in this direction. Therefore, this study argues that it is a misconception, both logically and factually, to perceive that movements outside the mainstream political institutions were “closely tied to more conventional political activity” (127).

Another instance concerning the inadequacy of the social movement theories is that the rational choice model of resource mobilisation theory contradicts with the way we formulated the idea of agency from the internal descriptions of the movements, AGMS and Plachimada. This model always looked at the actor’s choice in terms of rational selection, utilitarian notions, and purely individualistic motif, which are highly problematic in the context of adivasi agency articulated in a communitarian fashion.

In the Indian context, debates on social movements mainly categorise them as ‘old’ and ‘new’ social movements, and failed to pay much attention to the deeper questions regarding cultural, social and political claims of the movements. This study argues that any attempt to study social movements in terms of class and non-class politics by decoupling them as mutually exclusive entities without considering its interactive aspects has great limitations.

Taking the above factors into consideration, the present study proposes a new theoretical framework called postcolonial political sociology in order to understand the meanings of marginality, development and agency of the adivasi movements. According to this framework, the conceptualization within the classical and conventional political sociology based on the concepts such as political, state, power, ideology and the social are inadequate to explain the practices of marginality, development and agency. Therefore, postcolonial political sociology, informed by the experiences of non-Western societies, makes a departure from the conventional tradition of political sociology by incorporating nuanced understanding of the above mentioned concepts into its framework.

The frame of a postcolonial political sociology facilitated this study to set up an interface with adivasi studies with an emphasis on interdisciplinary approach. This study asserts that the social and political are mutually constitutive spheres, in the context of contemporary adivasi life and assertions. The social of adivasis is constituted through the elements of domination, subordination, exploitation and resistances which is broadly termed as marginality in this study. The question of autonomy, political economy and adivasi identity make the terrain of social and political more complicated. The condition is subjected to constant revaluation driven by the contemporary assertions of adivasis in Kerala in the post 1990s.

### **Revisiting the Question of Marginality**

Marginality has been discussed in this study as a descriptive condition as well as a conceptual category. The historical and socio-political constitution of adivasi marginality

resulting from the main stream practices of development has been located in the larger terrain of post-colonial capitalism. The efforts to build a colonial economy in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century had made overwhelming implications on adivasi life with regard to their land, forest and culture in Kerala. Marginality is inherently connected with land alienation, eviction from the forest, displacing the adivasis to the interior areas of forest and denying them to gather the forest resources. Therefore, marginality is not merely confined to the domain of social and cultural, rather it encompasses social, political, cultural and economic changes on adivasis. This understanding goes beyond the conventional division of *social-cultural* and *economic-political* as two separate and mutually exclusive entities and spaces.

In the post-colonial period, there were dual socio-economic processes which aggravated the condition of adivasi marginality. On the one hand, the period was marked with massive migration of the Syrian Christians from central Travancore to Malabar which resulted in the forceful displacement of adivasis from their natural habitats. On the other hand, arbitrary decisions and policy making of the nation state with respect to development deepens the marginality of adivasis. Setting up of wild life sanctuaries, national parks, hydro-electric and irrigation projects as part of development schema played a predominant role in displacing adivasis from the forest land. This developmental paradigm not only failed to notice the interests of adivasi communities, but also did not formulate a proper policy to protect and safeguard the fundamental rights of these marginalised sections in the society. Most of these wildlife sanctuaries and national parks were adivasi settlements. Because of new policies and development projects the forest department enforced many restrictions on the customary rights of adivasis and their

relation with the forest. In short, the rhetorical discourse of ‘nation building’ has constantly excluded the rural poor and marginalised sections of the nation since independence.

The present study identified and emphasised marginality of adivasis in the last two decades as resulted from the absence of control over land, forest, water and other significant natural resources. In the first instance, I argue that the AGMS’ various imaginations of Adivasi land were preoccupied with the modern idea of ownership over land. AGMS played an influential role in constructing the new discourse centered on Adivasi land question. It proposes a new politics over land by invoking the past and tradition which are deeply rooted in their cultural practices, and community life. The invocation of adivasi community as part of movement activism does not exactly match with a pre-given idea of a primordial community. Instead it demonstrates a “conscious mobilisation of cultural difference” (Appadurai 1997, 15) in terms of a community in the making. In other words, they claim ownership over land but it is articulated in a communitarian manner. Eventually the AGMS wanted to establish socially recognized economic rights over land as a precondition to break the existing social and economic inequality and marginality. When AGMS demand for land, they imagine a new and modern relationship to land. This imagination was totally absent in the former discourses on land articulated by the non-Adivasi organisations on behalf of adivasis. The present study argues that the agitation for five acres of land is a political battle for alternative ‘development’ of adivasis which embodies the idea of ownership and control of land as an important economic, cultural and political resource. In fact, the notion of ‘possession’,

and ‘private property’ were alien concepts in the adivasi life world. AGMS with its protracted struggle has re-imagined the relationship between land and the community.

The analysis of AGMS as a contemporary social movement reveals how marginality was interrogated and new discourses about land have emerged, which in fact transcends the binary between tradition and modern. The identification of AGMS with ‘land as a resource’ and the idea to ‘establish power over resources’ along with the sacredness of forest land presuppose a distinct modern imagination of ownership over land. In this imagination, land carries multiple meanings which can be explicated as a dwelling place, a site of agricultural production, a social and cultural resource and capital and also the notion of private ownership. In short, when AGMS demanded land they imagined multiple modes of relationship with land that are empirically grounded on their culture and tradition.

In the second case, Plachimada demonstrates a condition of marginality of adivasis as a result of the exploitation of water and natural resources by global capital. Here the already existing conditions of marginality have been exacerbated due to the capitalist appropriation of natural resources. Marginality is further aggravated through the appropriation of resources on one end and their simultaneous dispossession on the other end. In other words, it can be explained as a form of “accumulation by dispossession”. However, it does not mean that adivasis were displaced from their land since they were never the owners of land purchased by the Coca Cola Company. But they dispossessed the adivasis from their life world and agricultural land without absorbing them as factory workers.



Here the condition of *marginality* can be equated with Kalyan Sanyal's term *wasteland* where the lives of adivasis as agricultural labourers have been sabotaged and destroyed by the global expansion of capital through Coca Cola Company. Following Sanyal, one can say that the adivasis are "condemned to the world of excluded, the redundant, the dispensable, having nothing to lose, not even the chains of wage-slavery" (2007, 53). Indeed, this study agrees with Sanyal's conceptualisation while explaining the complexity of the expansion of global capital to a regional and local location like Plachimada. However, it appears difficult to justify his argument about the creation of non-capital 'other' as a production site by referring to Plachimada experience.

From these two specific cases we conclude that marginality of adivasis is a socio-political and economic construction. This has multiple dimensions in the present context which includes spatial, social, political, cultural and economic dimensions. Here, marginality of adivasis predominantly resulted in the process of complex and divergent discourses, institutions, and practices constituted in reference to development at different spaces such as global, national, regional and local during various historical phases. Thus, multiple axes of power play a crucial role in constructing marginality along with geographical location. We have already seen from the previous discussions how marginalization happened from their geographical locations and 'original' habitats in various historical phases as a result of the extraction of resources in divergent ways by the state, other dominant communities and global capital. This is basically an economic process which resulted in the spatial, social, political and cultural marginality of adivasis. Here spatial marginality indicates the process of displacement (both coercive and non-coercive) of adivasis from their forest land and forceful settlement in *colonies* (constructed

settlements offered by the government in the postcolonial period). Further, social marginality refers to the exclusion of adivasis from the social life of the general society. They are always located at the periphery, either in colonies which are artificial settlements developed by the state or in interior areas of the forest without being considered as citizens. These are the ways in which their social location is always configured as inferior to that of the rest of the communities in the society. In other words, they are constantly marginalised from the social and economic order of the society.

In the light of these discussions, their cultural marginality cannot be disconnected from the above dimensions of marginality. The cultural marginality of adivasis is always tied up with the question of identity. Thus it is evident that the official and the state discourse on adivasi culture made a distinction between 'nature' and culture whereby adivasi culture is separated from their natural environment. This implied a very static understanding of culture and community and located adivasi culture as that dissociated from all the socio-economic and political transformations of modernity. Thus, adivasi identity was basically located in the realm of culture and this in turn attributed an essentialist notion of identity on adivasis. In due course, it created an asymmetry in power relations and as a consequence, adivasi culture and community were isolated from the larger discourses of protection and preservation. This process can be broadly termed as cultural marginality in the present study. Hence, I believe that a new adivasi identity and agency has been emerging through multiple engagements which include struggle as well as negotiation with modern state, contestation over the question of social justice and equitable distribution of resources and, broadly, it entails the idea of recognition and redistribution in an intertwined fashion.

## **New Meaning of Agency of Adivasis in the Contemporary Society**

On the basis of the various discourses constructed within/by these two movements, I argue that in the present historical and political context, particular forms of subjectivity, experience and agency of the adivasis is formed through the resistance against the marginality and its various dimensions. The binary between subordination and resistance is still a useful category to understand the question of subjectivity, experience and agency of the adivasis. Following Hall's (1990) conceptualization of cultural identity, I argue that the discourses of the movement challenge the traditional, popular as well as academic efforts to construct the identity of the adivasis around an essentialised past.

I also found that conscious (sometimes unintentional also) attempts have been made to combine various aspects like claim for five acres of land, visualisation of agricultural production on that land, recovery of cultural past and traditional practices in connection with that land, along with the significant provisions offered in the constitutional and legal framework for the community. This reconciliation of various aspects in the making of a modern adivasi community exemplifies the invocation of a new adivasi agency. They started to assert that they are not always obedient and submissive subjects of subalternity and passive bearers of the condition of marginality.

It is also worth pointing out the gender aspect that cannot be overlooked while discussing about marginality and agency of adivasis. It is evident from the movement activism and the discourses related to it that women played a crucial role in building up both the movements. C K Janu and Mayilamma (represented AGMS and Plachimada respectively), the two Adivasi women leaders persistently problematised the condition of

the marginality of adivasis through their activism. Most often, as we have seen in the previous discussions, women were the prime sufferers of marginality. Therefore, they are doubly burdened with the economic and social marginality because they are more closely tied up with the land, water and other natural resources in ensuring the livelihood. In other words, the means of securing the necessities of everyday life of the family including the education of children, protection of aged people, treatment of sick persons are more becoming the responsibility of women. They have been strained to meet these necessities due to the economic and social marginality. Thus, we found that these marginal conditions equipped them to initiate the resistances and movements against all sorts of marginalities. This could be viewed as a process of recovering and pronouncing the notion of agency by the adivasi women.

Similarly, it seems reasonable to perceive that the question of adivasi agency is not a matter of personal autonomy and the determined actions of the individuals rather it could be visualised as a collective phenomenon. Thus, the idea of adivasi agency cannot be separated from their social and cultural context. Finally, the articulations from their life world (adivasis') as adivasi subjects which I presented in the previous chapters uphold the new notion of a community. This notion of agency primarily located in the specific, local historical and political context of adivasis contradict with the transcendental and liberal views on subjects, subject positions and agency.

In the state's official discourse and also in popular discourse, adivasi is associated with backwardness (economic and educational), poverty, ignorance, alcoholism, absence of modern agrarian practices and insufficient infrastructure and institutional facilities such as road, transportation, health centres, schools etc. Contrary to this, some of the academic

discourses positively associate adivasi life by uncritically valorizing community life, their economic practices, indigeneity, and broadly their distinct cultural practices. We found that both these views are equally problematic since it does not capture the complexity of their life in the present juncture. Instead the present study proposes a third position, informed by the postcolonial political sociology, where adivasis are engaging in a new politics (this is termed as *political* in this study) which critically negotiates with contemporary form of state, its developmentalism and postcolonial capitalism.

In this context, Partha Chatterjee's proposition concerned with the functioning of postcolonial capitalism has partial significance to the present study. Chatterjee, following Kalyan Sanyal, argues that postcolonial capital is operating in a twofold manner in which one indicates the process of primitive accumulation and the other refers to the reversal process of primitive accumulation. This study broadly agrees with the first part of the proposition but completely disagrees with the second. Thus one could see that these two movements struggle against the arbitrary decisions of the state and its developmentalism are instances of the resistance against postcolonial capitalism. Developmentalism can be located in the larger terrain of postcolonial capitalism where primitive accumulation is a reality in Kerala. At the same time the processes of accumulation took place in a dual fashion which refers coercive and non-coercive execution of power. David Harvey's idea of 'accumulation by dispossession' is more appropriate to explain the displacement of adivasis from their land. Kalyan Sanyal's (2007) conceptualisation of the new features of postcolonial capitalism is highly significant in explaining the appropriation of land by the the state, powerful non-adivasi communities and global capitalist enterprise and its impact on the life of adivasis. I agree with Sanyal that this appropriation creates a non-

capital 'other' which represents the unemployed and dispossessed adivasis as agricultural labourers. However, it does not create 'non-capital' as a production site as he explained in the case of postcolonial capitalism. In line with this general framework, one further point worth noting here is the response of the Kerala state towards the demands of the movement. Slightly deviated from the national response or responses at various sub-national levels, the Kerala state was forced to intervene in the demands articulated by the movements more sympathetically. This sympathetic approach is reflected in the assurance and re-assurance to provide land to all landless adivasis (though this was violated many times) and the formulation of *Plachimada Tribunal Bill*, 2011 for getting compensation to the victims. Rather than perceiving this approach of the state as the 'reversal of primitive accumulation', this study conceived it as the agonistic concept of 'politics' and 'political' (Mouffe 2005). The realm of 'politics' which mainly constitute the state institutions and its practices are compelled to accept the demands in principle by moderately ameliorating its content through an engagement and negotiation with the terrain of 'political'.

Finally, by taking all discourses within/by these movements into account I found a new notion of adivasi agency in the context of local, regional and sub-national spaces. This agency is a response to the marginality resulted through the practices of development conceived within postcolonial capitalism. Thus, we could recognise that the adivasis in Kerala are gaining a new consciousness about how they have been subjected to the exploitation of the developmentalism on the one hand and global capital vis-à-vis postcolonial capitalism on the other. One can conclude that this consciousness is not a sign of powerlessness, instead it manifests a new power, different from what has been

known previously among adivasis. They demand “recognition of their social existence and consciousness” (Dirlik 1997, 90), against a development model, ‘Kerala model of development,’ constituted within the larger frame of modernity that failed to recognize their historical, cultural and political presence.

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## Appendix 1

### Landless and Homeless Adivasi Families (Community Wise)

SL No	Adivasi Community	Landless	Homeless	SL No	Adivasi Community	Landless	Homeless
	Malai Pandaram	29	101	21.	Malavedan	73	145
	Kudiya/Malakku di	13	23	22.	Malasar	364	434
	Adiyan	8	267	23.	Malayan	86	150
	Arandan	13	16	24.	Malayarayar	16	36
	Iravalan	123	185	25.	Mannan	30	112
	Hillpulaya	71	105	26.	Muthuvan	45	226
	Irular	791	1112	27.	Mudugar	110	215
	Irulan	0	0	28.	Paliyan	6	21
	Kadar	10	44	29.	Paniyan	1548	2722
	Wayanad Kadar	5	15	30.	Ulladan	294	531
	Kanikkaran	17	159	31.	Urali	12	52
	Kanikkar	2	2	32.	Malavettuvan	113	279
	Kattunaikan	317	587	33.	Thachanadan	0	0
	Koraga	25	36	34.	Thachanadan Mooppan	18	27
	Kurichiyan	174	485	35.	Chola Nayikkan	7	11

	Kurumar	22	25	36.	Mavilan	26	7
	Kurumbar	25	34	37.	Karimpalan	0	0
	Mahamalar	1	5	38.	Vettakuruman	57	121
	Malayarayan	57	152	39.	Malapanikkar	0	0
	Malaivedana	0	0	40.	Kurumar/Mullukurumar	106	268
<b>Total</b>						4614 (4.57)	8781 (8.70)

Source: Basic Information of ST Communities (2008), State Level Tables Prepared by Department of Local Self Government, ST Development department and KILA

#### Land Ownership (Area)

SL. No.	Area of Land (in cent)	Number of Families	Percent
1.	Below 5 Cent	20027	20.00
2.	5-9	14977	14.96
3.	10-24	16265	16.26
4.	25-49	9178	9.17
5.	50-99	12256	12.24
6.	Above 100 Cents	27416	27.31
Total		100119	100

Source: Basic Information of ST Communities (2008), State Level Tables Prepared by Department of Local Self Government, ST Development department and KILA.

### **Land Alienated Families**

SL. No.	Area (in Cent)	Number of Families	Area of Land (Acres)
	Above 10 Cents	119	60.95
	10-49	137	806.20
	50-100	101	432.41
	Above 100 Cent	696	2661.73
Total		1053	3961.29

Source: Basic Information of ST Communities (2008), State Level Tables Prepared by Department of Local Self Government, ST Development department and KILA.

## Appendix 2

### THE PLACHIMADA COCA-COLA VICTIMS RELIEF AND COMPENSATION CLAIMS SPECIAL TRIBUNAL

BILL, 2011

(As Passed by the Kerala Assembly)

A

#### *BILL*

*to provide for the establishment of a Special Tribunal for the expeditious adjudication of disputes and recovery of compensation for the victims from the Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Private Limited and matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.*

*Preamble.* — WHEREAS it is expedient to establish a Special Tribunal for the adjudication of disputes and recovery of compensation for the damages caused by the Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Private Limited by entertaining original applications and by transferring cases pending before the various courts and other authorities to the Tribunal and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto;

AND WHEREAS, there has been environmental degradation, soil degradation, water contamination by over extraction of ground water and thereby causing scarcity of drinking water by the coca-cola company at Plachimada;

AND WHEREAS, there has been a steady decline in the agriculture production due to the irresponsible disposal of sludge by the Company;

AND WHEREAS, the presence of metals like cadmium, lead and chromium in the sludge affected the general health of people with skin ailments, breathing problems and other debilities;

AND WHEREAS, on account of the social, health and economic factors caused by pollution, children have dropped out of the school;

AND WHEREAS, the Government intends to settle once and for all the disputes relating to the above matters by establishing a Special Tribunal for taking a final decision thereon within a fixed time limit;

BE it enacted in the Sixty-second Year of the Republic of India, as follows: —



1. Short title and commencement.— (1) This Act may be called the Plachimada Coca-Cola Victims Compensation Claims Special Tribunal Act, 2011.

(2) It shall come into force at once.

2. Definitions.— In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—

- (a) “Administrative Member” means the administrative member of the Tribunal appointed under section 4;
- (b) “Application” means an application made to the Tribunal under section 11;
- (c) “Chairperson” means the Chairperson of the Tribunal appointed under section 4;
- (d) “Company” means Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Private Limited registered under the Company’s Act, 1956 (Central Act 1 of 1956);
- (e) “Dispute” means any issue in respect of matters arising out of violation of the provisions of laws relating to environment, air and water pollution between residents of Perumatty and Pattanchery Panchayats or such other Panchayat as may be specified by Government and the Company;
- (f) “Expert member” means the expert member of the Tribunal appointed under section 4;
- (g) “Government” means the Government of Kerala;
- (h) “Notification” means a notification published in the Official Gazette;
- (i) “person” means a resident of Perumatty or Pattanchery Panchayats or such other Panchayats as may be specified by the Government in this behalf;
- (j) “prescribed” means prescribed by rules;
- (k) “State” means the State of Kerala;
- (l) “Tribunal” means the Special Tribunal established under section 3 of the Act.

3. Establishment of the Tribunal.— The Government shall, by notification, establish a Special Tribunal called the “Plachimada Coca -Cola Victims Compensation Claims Special Tribunal” to exercise the powers, functions and authority conferred on such Tribunal by or under this Act.

4. Composition and Functions of the Tribunal.— (1) The Tribunal shall consist of three members appointed by Government by notification of whom one shall be a Chairperson and the others, shall be an administrative member and an expert member, for such period as may be prescribed ;

(2) The Chairperson and the other members shall be deemed to be public servants within the meaning of section 21 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (Central Act 45 of 1860).

(3) The Chairperson shall exercise such financial and administrative powers that are necessary for the functioning of the Tribunal and may delegate the same subject to such terms and conditions as may be prescribed.

(4) Save as otherwise expressly provided in this Act, the Tribunal shall adjudicate all applications and cases relating to disputes filed, transferred or referred to the Tribunal and matters connected therewith or incidental thereto in respect of persons and, for such adjudication, exercise powers and authority that are exercisable by a Civil Court of competent jurisdiction.

(5) It shall be competent for the Chairperson or any other member, as authorised by the Chairperson in this behalf, to hold sitting individually and exercise jurisdiction, functions and powers of the Tribunal relating to the applications and cases as entrusted by the Chairperson.

5. Qualification for appointment as Chairperson, Administrative Member and Expert Member.— (1) No person shall be qualified for appointment as Chairperson of the Tribunal unless he is or has been a District Judge.

(2) No person shall be qualified for appointment as Administrative Member of the Tribunal unless he,—

(i) is or has been a Head of the Department, not below the rank of an Additional Secretary to Government;

(ii) holds a Bachelors Degree in Engineering or Science from a recognized University; and

(iii) possesses experience of at least three years in dealing with problems relating to water and hydrology, public affairs and administration.

(3) No person shall be qualified for appointment as an Expert Member unless he,—

(i) holds a Masters Degree in Life Science and environmental matters; and

(ii) possesses experience of at least ten years in dealing with problems relating to environmental policy, planning and management.

(4) No person who,—

(i) has been removed or dismissed from the service of the Government or a body corporate owned or controlled by the Government; or

(ii) has in the opinion of the Government, interest which is likely to affect prejudicially the discharge of his functions as a member; or

(iii) has such other disqualifications as may be prescribed by the Government,

shall be appointed as a member of the Tribunal.

6. Term of office and other conditions of service of the Chairperson and other Members.— (1) The Chairperson and other Members shall hold office for a term of two years, from the date on which they enter upon their office or until the Chairperson or the Members, as the case may be, attains the age of sixty-five years and sixty years, respectively, whichever is earlier ;

(2) The salaries and allowances payable and other terms and conditions of service of the chairperson and members of the Tribunal shall be such as may be prescribed;

(3) If, for any reason other than temporary absence, any vacancy occurs in the office of the Chairperson or the members of the Tribunal then the Government shall appoint another person in accordance with the provisions of this Act to fill the vacancy and the proceedings may be continued before the Tribunal from the stage at which the vacancy arose.

(4) The Chairperson or the Members of the Tribunal may, in writing under his hand addressed to the Government resign his office:

Provided that the Chairperson or members of Tribunal shall, unless he is permitted by the Government to relinquish his office, continue to hold office until the expiry of three months from the date of receipt of such notice or until a person duly appointed as his successor enters upon his office or until the expiry of his term of office, whichever is earlier.

(5) The Chairperson or members of the Tribunal shall be removed from their office by the Government on the ground of proved misconduct or incapacity, in such manner as may be prescribed.

(6) The Government may, by rules regulate the procedure for the investigation of misconduct or incapacity of the Chairperson or members of the Tribunal.

7. Orders establishing Tribunal to be final and not to invalidate its proceedings.— No order of the Government appointing any person as Chairperson or members of the Tribunal shall be called in question in any manner and no act

or proceedings before a Tribunal shall be called in question in any manner on the ground merely of any defect in the establishment of a Tribunal.

8. Staff of the Tribunal.— (1) The Government shall in consultation with the chairperson provide such number of officers and other employees that are necessary for the smooth functioning of the Tribunal by deputation from the Law Department or such other Departments in the Secretariat, in the manner as may be prescribed.

(2) The salaries and other allowances payable and other terms and conditions of service of the Officers and other employees of the Tribunal shall be such as may be prescribed.

9. Transfer of cases to the Tribunal.—(1)Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force or order, decree or judgment, all cases in respect of a person on matters arising out of violations of law relating to environment, air and water pollution in which the Company is a party and are pending before any court or other authority, except the High Court or Supreme Court, shall stand transferred to the Tribunal immediately on the establishment of the Tribunal under this Act.

(2) It shall be the duty of all courts and other authorities except the High Court and the Supreme Court to ensure that all records relating to such disputes have been duly transferred to the Tribunal within thirty days of the establishment of the Tribunal under this Act.

10. Power of High Court to refer cases to the Tribunal.— Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force or order, decree or judgment, the High Court of Kerala may refer any matter pending before it relating to the company for which Tribunal is empowered to adjudicate under this Act, for final decision thereon:

Provided that on such reference the Tribunal shall proceed with the matter as if it were filed before it originally and pass orders under this Act, which shall be final.

11. Applications before the Tribunal.— (1) The Tribunal shall also entertain applications for compensation or restitution of property damaged, against the Company arising out of grievances due to violation of laws relating to environment, air and water pollution or in the implementation thereof.

(2) Every application under sub-section (1) shall be made to the Tribunal in such form containing such particulars and accompanied by such documents as may be prescribed.

(3) No application for such compensation or restitution of property damaged shall be entertained unless it is made within six months from the date of establishment of the Tribunal:

Provided that the Tribunal may entertain an application after the expiry of the said period of six months but not later than twelve months, if it is satisfied that the applicant was prevented by sufficient cause from making the application in time.

12. Power of the Tribunal to make Regulations.— Subject to the previous sanction of the Government, the Tribunal shall, for the purpose of regulating its own procedure make regulations not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act and the rules made thereunder.

13. Powers of the Tribunal.— (1) The Tribunal shall for the purpose of exercising any power conferred by or under this Act, have the powers of a Civil Court while trying a suit under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (Central Act 5 of 1908) in respect of the following matters, namely:—

- (a) summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person and examining him on oath;
- (b) requiring the discovery and production of documents;
- (c) receiving evidence on affidavits;
- (d) issuing commissions for the examination of witnesses;
- (e) reviewing its decisions;
- (f) dismissing an application for default or deciding it ex-parte;
- (g) setting aside any order of dismissal of any application for default or any order passed by it ex-parte;
- (h) any other matter as may be prescribed.

14. Procedure to be deemed to be judicial proceedings.— All proceedings before the Tribunal shall be deemed to be a judicial proceeding within the meaning of sections 193, 219 and 228 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (Central Act 45 of 1860).

15. Award of the Tribunal.— (1) On receipt of an application for compensation or restitution of property damaged made under section 11, the Tribunal shall, after giving notice of the application to the Company and an opportunity of being heard to the parties, hold an enquiry into the claim or as the case may be, on each of the claims in the application pass an award

allowing or rejecting compensation or such other orders which appears to it just and reasonable and specifying the person who is entitled to receive the compensation from the Company.

(2) The Tribunal shall while passing any award or order, apply the principles of sustainable developments, precautionary principle and the polluter pays principle.

(3) The Tribunal shall cause to deliver copies of the award to all the parties concerned expeditiously and in any case it shall not go beyond a period of fifteen days from the date of the award.

(4) When an award is made under this section, the Company shall within thirty days from the date of receipt of a copy thereof, deposit the entire amount with the Tribunal in such manner as the Tribunal may direct.

(5) Where the Tribunal allows a claim for compensation made under this Act, it may also order that, in addition to the amount of compensation, simple interest at such rate shall also be paid from such date but not earlier than the date of making the application as it may specify in this behalf.

16. Appeal.— (1) The Government or any person aggrieved by the decision of the Tribunal may within sixty days of the date of receipt of a copy of award or decision, file an appeal before the High Court:

Provided that the High Court shall not entertain an appeal under sub-section (1) unless there is a substantial question of law is involved in it.

(2) The appeal shall be in such form, verified in such manner and accompanied by such fee as may be prescribed.

17. Mode of recovery of the award amount.— Where any amount is due from the Company under an award or decision, as the case may be, the Tribunal may, on an application made to it by the person entitled to the amount, issue a certificate for the amount to the District Collector and the District Collector shall proceed to recover the said amount with interest in the manner as if it were arrears of revenue due on land.

18. Bar on Jurisdiction of Civil Court.— No Civil Court shall with effect from the date of commencement of this Act, have jurisdiction to settle dispute or entertain any question relating to any claim for granting any relief or compensation or restitution of

property damaged which may be adjudicated upon by the Tribunal and no injunction in respect of any action taken or to be taken by or before the Tribunal in respect of the settlement of such dispute or any claim for granting any relief or restitution of property damaged shall be granted by the Civil Court.

19. Protection of action taken in good faith.— No suit, prosecution or other legal proceeding shall lie against the Chairperson or Members of the Tribunal, its Secretary or employees for anything done or intended to be done in good faith in pursuance of this Act or any rule or order made thereunder.

20. Power to make rules.— (1) The Government may, by notification, make rules not inconsistent with this Act, for carrying out the provisions of this Act.

(2) In particular and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing powers, such rules may, provide for all or any of the following matters, namely:—

(i) all matters expressly required or allowed by this Act to be prescribed; and

(ii) any other matter which has to be, or may be prescribed.

(3) Every rule made under this Act shall be laid, as soon as may be after it is made, before the Legislative Assembly, while it is in session for a total period of fourteen days which may be comprised in one session or in two or more successive sessions, and if, before the expiry of the session immediately following the session or the successive sessions aforesaid, Legislature agree that the notification or rule should not be issued or made, the notification or rule shall thereafter have effect only in such modified form or be of no effect, as the case may be ; so, however, that any such modification or annulment shall be without prejudice to the validity of anything previously done under that notification or rule.

21. Power to remove difficulties.— (1) If any difficulty arises in giving effect to any of the provisions of this Act, the Government may, by order published in the official Gazette, make such provisions or take such measures not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, as appears to it to be necessary or expedient for the purpose of removing the difficulty:

Provided that no such order shall be made after the expiry of a period of two years from the date of commencement of this Act.

(2) Any order made by the Government under sub-section (1) shall be laid as soon as may be after such order is made before the Legislative Assembly.

22. Cessation of functioning of the Tribunal.— (1) The Government, if it is satisfied that all applications filed and cases either transferred or referred to the Tribunal under this

Act have been finally disposed of and functioning of the Tribunal is no more required, may by notification, order cessation of the functioning of the Tribunal and Tribunal shall thereupon cease to function and in such case it shall be deemed to have been wound up with effect from the date of the notification.

(2) All records and other materials of the Tribunal shall on such cessation under sub-section (1) shall be transmitted to the District Court and such record shall be deemed to be part of the record of the District Court.